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(WORLD WAR II's 2500-MILE ESCAPE SURVIVAL ACROSS THE ROOF OF THE WORLD)

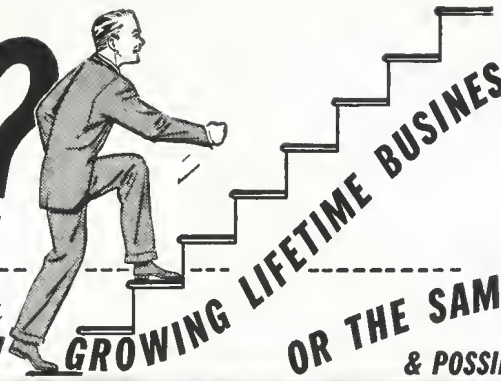
I WENT THROUGH THE GESTAPO'S

FRÄULEIN TORTURE



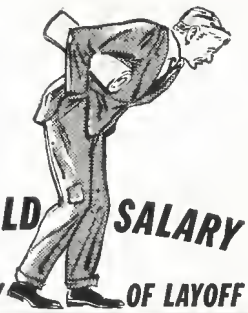
THE DESERT RAT AND HIS $20,000,000 CHRISTMAS BONUS

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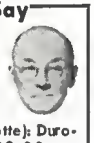
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A moderate payment establishes your own business—pay balance from sales. We furnish electric machines, folders, store cards and enough materials to return your TOTAL investment. You can have your business operating in a few days. Mail coupon today!



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What Dealers Say



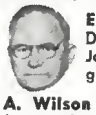
W. Lookiebill (St. Louis): My 27th year! Began during depression and built business on good service.



D. Chilcott (N. Platte): Duracleon soy gross $9.00 per hour. I gross up to $12.00. Mony dealers do much better.



M. Lyons (Chgo): 2nd year should hit $100,000; 1st was $40,000. Hdqrs help makes it possible.



E. Roddey (Hampton, Va.): Did $600.00 first 12 days in Jonuory. My business keeps growing eoch month.



A. Wilson (Tulsa): Made $1,299 this month working alone. Duraclean outperforms all competitors.

Advantages of Duraclean's Process Win Over Customers

Duraclean's growth to a world-wide service resulted from *customer convenience* plus its many superiorities over ordinary cleaning. Housewives, clubs, hotels, offices and institutions deeply appreciate not having furnishings out of use for days and weeks.

They are thrilled when they see their carpets and upholstery cleaned with a *new consideration for its life and beauty.* Duraclean doesn't merely clean . . . it restores natural lubrication to wool and other animal fibers. Colors revive. The reenlivened rug and carpet pile again stand erect and even. An aerated foam created by the electric Foamovator (left) vanishes dirt, grease and many unsightly spots . . . without scrubbing. Customers tell friends how Duraclean has eliminated the customary soaking, shrinking and breaking of fibers from harsh machine scrubbing . . . how the mild, quick acting foam, lightly applied, provides safety from color runs and roughened fabric they have previously experienced . . . how fabrics look fresher, brighter and look cleaner . . . how convenient it is not to have furnishings gone.

They appreciate the courteous, personalized service of Duraclean craftsmen. Such service is NEWS . . . and it spreads to friends and neighbors. Customers become your best salesmen.

You Provide a Complete Service

A dealership qualifies you to offer four other services. Thus on many jobs you **multiply** profits. **Durashield:** Soil-retarding treatment which keeps furnishings clean MONTHS longer. **Duraproof:** Protects against moth damage. It's backed by an International 6-Year Warranty. **Duraguard:** Flameproofing treatment which reduces fire damage. Theatres, hotels, homes offer huge potential. **Spotcraft:** Products which enable you to handle most all spot or staining problems.

Easy Terms

No experience necessary! Some dealers establish shops or an office . . . others operate from home. Service may be rendered on location. Auto dealers buy your Duraclean service to revive upholstery in used cars. Almost every building houses a potential customer needing your services. You enjoy big profits on both materials and labor. We show you 27 ways to bring customers to you.

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WITHOUT OBLIGATION, show me how I may enjoy a steadily increasing life income in my OWN business. Enclose FREE booklets and free details.

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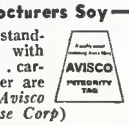
Backed by Famous Awards



These two important honors conferred on Duraclean give PROOF of your superior services. As a Duraclean Dealer, you will be the only cleaning service in town backed by both these famous seals. No wonder customers buy Duraclean so quickly!



What Manufacturers Say



". . (Duraclean) standards in keeping with service to which . . carpets and consumer are entitled." —*Avisco (American Viscose Corp)*

". . superior to any on-location process with which I'm familiar." —*President, Modern Tufting Co.*

". . we approve this process . . in keeping with better service to Mrs. Housewife." —*Aldon Rug Mills*

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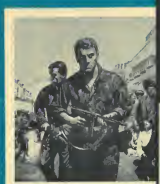
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FOR MEN ONLY

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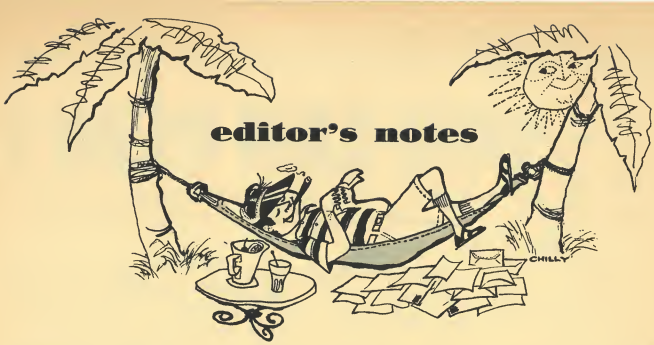
Do you have the instrument?.....

Mr.
Mrs.....
Miss (Please Print Carefully)

Address.....

City.....State.....
(Insert Zone Number, if any)

NOTE: If you are under 18 years of age check here for booklet "A" ☐



SYMPATHETIC TOES

To the Editor:

There have been so many stories and articles describing torture by Nazis, that it is pretty hard to come up with anything that's new, even the toe-nail pullings that French woman went through in *84 Avenue Foch: House of No Escape,* (FOR MEN ONLY, December).

Nevertheless, this piece was quite graphic, and I wanted to write and say simply that it got to me. As I read it, my own toes began to double up uncontrollably inside my shoes.

Robert Farrington
Dallas, Texas

THE NO-GOOD HE 177

To the Editor:

Rightly or wrongly, I think the most convincing piece of writing in your December issue is your story *The Dogfight that saved the 8th Air Force.*

I happen to know one or two things about the German He 177, and, believe me, it never had a chance against our B-17. Considering the plane's history, it's a wonder it got off the ground, because it had more things wrong with it than you have space to print.

As you know, the aircraft was designed by Ernst Heinkel, one of the foremost German aerodynamical engineers—who, incidentally, published his memoirs in this country. Even Heinkel admits that the bomber was unfit for combat, although through no fault of his own.

The trouble was that the Luftwaffe insisted on a four-engined plane with a dive-bombing performance, and this wasn't feasible. Heinkel compromised by installing two coupled-engine units, but this increased the fire hazard. The plane had to carry quite a load of armament; it was too heavy and too big. It was constantly redesigned but never really got to the stage of mass production.

Heinkel knew about the flaw of his own brainchild, but it wasn't until late in 1943 that he was permitted to turn the He 177 into a regular horizontal four-engined bomber, which became known as He 277.

But by the time the He 277 was ready for mass production, in 1945, it was—thank God for us!—too late.

Frank Knott
Philadelphia, Pa.

TREASURE STORY

To the Editor:

I was interested in your account in *For Men Only Final* in November about the Russian expedition that finally scaled the Pamir Mountains in Central Asia and reached the Mata-Tash cave. For many years I have occasionally read reports of various groups of Alpinists that have tried to scale this icy peak to look for the fabulous treasure that was supposed to be buried there. According to your reports, when the mountain climbers reached the cave, they found it was empty.

Well that's that I suppose, but as I have always heard the story, the treasure was supposed to have been buried by a Chinese army that was trapped there over 200 years ago, when they were dying of cold and were cut off from retreat. The thing I've always wondered is if the army was in so bad a shape, how in the world did they manage to get the treasure, (so called, presumably) up the precipice.

J. Marbury
York, Nebraska

▶ **According to reports handed down for generations, it worked like this: In the bitter cold, the horses that carried the giant army all froze to death, and their bodies were piled one on the other straight up to the mouth of the cave.**

COLD WAR

To the Editor:

As I sit here blowing my nose and sniffing at my benzedrine inhaler, I see the item in the December FOR MEN ONLY *Medical Roundup* which tells that a Scottish doctor is working on a cold vaccine based on cold patients' saliva. It also stated that the doctor won't say whether it works or not until he's finished further research.

I'd like to say that if the doc needs more saliva, he can have mine, if it will speed his research any. I suffer from frequent colds, and I would like to know whether there is any further word on this remedy.

Otto Mehlner
Flushing, N. Y.

▶ **Sorry, Mr. Mehlner, no further word has come from Scotland, but we suggest you see your doctor—there must be something he can do for you.**

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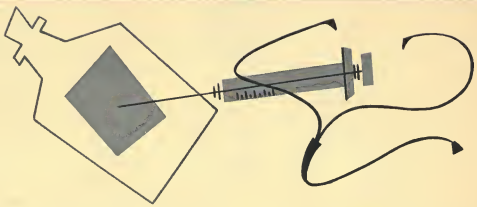
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MEDICAL ROUNDUP

FOR MEN ONLY



WOODS ARE FULL OF ZOONOSIS This item is strictly for hunters, those gun-toting fanatics who risk zoonosis every time they head for the woods to bag a bird or animal. Zoonosis is what you're liable to pick up from one of the targets you're trying to hit, and there are 83 possible ailments they can give you. The following are some of the more common troubles you're likely to run



into: 1. Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever, spread by infected ticks that live on rabbits, foxes, dogs. Antibiotics will usually take care of this one. 2. Rabies, deadliest of all. Found among wild animals such as skunks, foxes, coyotes, wolves, plus domesticated house pets. Precautions must be taken immediately following any bites, or any licking of open wounds by infected animals. Once the disease sets in, death will follow within 10 days. 3. Parrot Fever. Stay away from ducks, lovebirds, pigeons, parakeets, parrots, chickens and wild turkey if you want to avoid it. Antibiotics hold the cure. 4. Rabbit Fever or Tularemia. This body-weakener is passed on by rabbits, field mice, opossums, squirrels, coyotes and skunks. Very often contracted while skinning afflicted animals. Again, head for the antibiotics.

■ ■ ■

PENICILLIN FIVE-PERCENTER—If you're one of the five percent of the population who is allergic to penicillin, your doctor will probably work off the effects with a new drug called Neutrapen. You'll know you're allergic to penicillin if, after you've taken some, you break out with a skin rash or your joints begin to swell. Unfortunately, there are even some people whose reactions to penicillin have resulted in death. With Neutrapen, one injection is usually all that's needed to counter the allergic reactions.

■ ■ ■

TIPS FOR FINGERS—It's bad enough to slice a piece from the end of your finger, but it's compounding the accident to lose the chip you've lopped off. Should you chop away the tip, wrap the severed piece in cleansing tissue, apply a tourniquet to stop the bleeding, then rush to your local doctor or hospital. Chances are well in your favor that the missing part can be sewn back on—even if the amputated end includes particles of bone, nail bed, ligament and skin. One important "don't": Don't apply anything corrosive like iodine to the injured part.

■ ■ ■

SHAKE IT; DON'T BREAK IT—Osteopaths have been reporting an increase in the number of back injuries they have been called up to treat within the past



few months. Many of these cases involve partial dislocation of the sacroiliac. After puzzling over the sudden influx of business, the doctors have finally pinned down the reason: the hula hoop madness has hit the American adult.

KIDS "CHICKEN" TO EX-G.I. DADS There has been a definite increase in mental hospital admissions among the group of patients listed as "war babies." This group includes those who were born while their fathers were overseas or away from home in distant stateside army camps. When the parent returned from the service, the results were not always happy. Coming from a life of rigid discipline, the father couldn't understand the



child being so "spoiled," especially if the child was a boy. The father was inclined to regard him as a "sissy." What really complicated the situation was the birth of additional children—children who had the advantage of both parents in constant attendance. This increased the resentment felt by the "war baby" until, in many cases, he became one of the statistics that have doctors plenty worried.

■ ■ ■

DOCTORS TRY AN 11-1 SHOT—Over 25,000 volunteers may hold the answer to prevention of the round of respiratory infections that hit every year. They are going to be guinea pigs for a new 11-in-one vaccine combination shot that has been developed to deliver a knockout punch to such diseases as the common cold, Asian flu and mild respiratory infections. The volunteers come mostly from industry, medical schools and prisons. Results will be published as soon as they are received.



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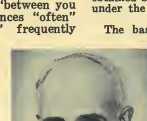
Everyone Takes Bill for a College Man... Until He Starts to Speak

Then the Blunders He Makes in English Reveal His Lack of Education

He *looks* every inch a college graduate. But Bill Harmon is walking, talking proof that clothes do *not* make the man!

The instant he starts to speak, you get a shocking surprise. You expect to hear a cultured voice, speaking faultless, colorful English. Instead, you hear errors in grammar and glaring mistakes in pronunciation. For example, he says "Between you and I" instead of "between you and me." He pronounces "often" "off-ten," uses "who" frequently when he should use "whom"; makes other blunders which even the average *high school* student should know enough to avoid!

The pity of it is that Bill (like thousands of others) continually makes "boners," in speaking and writing, without realizing that he is doing so. It's really astonishing how few people are *sure* about whether to spell certain words with one or two "c's" or "m's" or "r's"—or with "ie" or "ei," and when to use commas to make their meaning crystal-clear. Many use only the most commonplace words—flat, colorless, ordinary. Their speech and their letters are dull, lifeless, humdrum—largely because they lack confidence in their use of language.



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Does *your* English help you or hurt you? Every time you talk or write, you show what you are. When you use the wrong word, when you mispronounce or misspell a word, when you punctuate incorrectly, when you use trite, overworked words, you handicap yourself enormously. English, the very tool you should use to *improve* your business and social position, HOLDS YOU BACK. And you may not even realize it, because people are too polite to point out your mistakes!

But now—regardless of how much or little schooling you have had—Sherwin Cody offers you a simple and practical way to acquire a mastery of English in only a few minutes a day. With Sherwin Cody's method, you'll find that it's just as easy to form the habit of using good English as it is to fall into the rut of using faulty English.

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For many years Mr. Cody studied the problem of creating instinctive habits of using good English. Some time ago he was invited by the author of the famous Gary System of Education to teach English to all upper-grade pupils in Gary, Indiana. By means of unique practice exercises, Mr. Cody secured more improvement in these pupils in five weeks than previously had been obtained by similar pupils in two years under the old methods.

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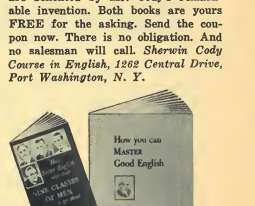
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short shorts



"Herbert, don't leave me!"

The scene is a train compartment in Romania. The Characters: A Russian Officer, a Romanian, an old lady, and an attractive girl.

The train enters a tunnel. The passengers hear first a kiss, then a vigorous slap.

The old lady thinks: "What a good girl she is, such good manners, such fine moral character!"

The girl thinks: "Isn't it odd that the Russian tried to kiss the old lady and not me."

The Russian thinks: "That Romanian is a smart fellow! He steals a kiss and I get slapped!"

The Romanian thinks: "Am I a smart fellow. I kiss the back of my hand, hit a Russian officer and get away with it."

■ ■ ■

Adam and Eve in the garden had a pretty hard day naming the animals.

'Well, Adam," said Eve, "let's call this one a hippopotamus."

"But, darling, why a hippopotamus?"

"Well, hell, it looks like a hippopotamus, doesn't it?"

A Texan arriving at the gate of his eternal home remarked: "Ah never thought heaven could be so much like Texas."

"Son," replied the gatekeeper, "This ain't heaven."

■ ■ ■

It was during Prohibition. The railroad station was packed with a gay throng. Over at one side of the waiting room stood a quiet little man fidgeting about and attempting to hide himself from the crowd. A federal agent noticed that the man had something in his pocket from which drops were falling in slow trickles. The fed, with a gleam in his eye, put a finger out under one of the drops, caught one and tasted it.

"Scotch?" he asked.

"Nope," replied the stranger, "Airdale pup."

Mamie had been looking all night for her wandering husband—from bar to bar. She finally found him at two in the morning, seated in front of a tall glass in a tavern.

She sneaked up and sampled his drink. "Brr!" she spat, dropping it very quickly. "That stuff is awful."

He eyed her sadly. "See that! And you thought I was out having a good time."

■ ■ ■

Two old maids were driving along through the country. As they passed a farmhouse, a hen came tearing out of the yard, hotly pursued by a rooster. Not watching where she was going, the hen ran right under the wheels of the old maids' car.

After they had driven on for a while, one of the old gals clucked, "The sweet thing. She preferred death!"



"Two dollars on Brigitte Bardot to show."



DEATH TREK OF SGT. "SHOTGUN" SCHULTZ

by George Mandel

In the longest escape-survival attempt of World War II, four men followed this noncom 2500 miles, across the roof of the world.

The whole thing had proceeded like a dream and that was a good thing for the Americans who, grimy and battered, knew that death was among them but had not yet assessed its extent. There were six of them in a cave with five Chinese. Three of the Chinese were women, dressed like their two men in broad straw hats, peasant pants, and short, open jackets that haphazardly exposed their breasts. All five were armed with rifles and showed cheerful smiles in the apparent presence of death. That was as dreamlike as all of it had been—the carrying of the three unconscious airmen, the blood, the forest and bamboo and heavily camouflaged cave, the serviceable English of the woman called Ningan. Even the watery gray rice served in big bamboo husks seemed beyond reality.

Reality had been distant from the instant the three Zeroes appeared. They had come like bits of tinfoil fluttering in the sun, little toys against the afternoon sky, so that the menace conveyed itself some seconds late. Then, in stuttering bursts, deadly slugs went searing down the big Dakota's whole futile length. The pilot cursed the fighter escort that had failed to come from Changsha and, shrieking, was raked and hammered down across the controls. The co-pilot threw him back, banked the cumbersome crate, rolled her westward toward the sun while slugs rang and crashed. Answering fire burst from the tail blister. Meanwhile, the Sergeant was bellowing orders for cargo to be dumped.

He got busy that way even while the instruments were crashing apart under the yelping co-

PLEASE TURN PAGE



The Japs writhed on the ground, and three men came out of the jungle swinging native swords to finish them off.

Art by Mort Künstler



With casualties heavy, Chinese badly needed medical supplies the Dakota was carrying when shot down.

DEATH TREK OF SGT. SCHULTZ continued

pilot's hands. The cargo was medical supplies that could mean life or death to the Chinese holding the Canton line. He went into action, dumping cargo in just so many seconds while the earth came flying up —mountain and forest and rice paddy whorls. The Sergeant had two men dumping crates while the tail-gunner came scrambling by on hands and knees in a trail of blood. Then everybody was flying around as the Dakota plowed screeching through the rice paddy and took its crazy leap, the shuddering collapse on its back. He was shoving, then, the burly Sergeant, pitching men out of sudden flames.

Legs were plowing through knee-deep water. The Sergeant yelled for someone to drag the crippled co-pilot away from the wreck and then plunged back into the black smoke after the tail-gunner. He returned another time and came splashing after the retreating men in a lopsided dance to the rock-sausage embankment of the terrace; there, with a curious gentleness, he laid the bloody and unmoving pilot down.

It was all a crazy dream and in it Lieutenant Henderson, the co-pilot, screamed, "Sergeant, she's gonna explode!" But the stupefied noncom kept going on back to the inferno that by then held no one, dead or alive. It blew up. The Dakota let out a mighty roar that belched the Sergeant out of smoke and flame, to the despairing cries of those still conscious. Rolling curtains of smoke descended over him, but he came leaping out of them in a trail of muddy water, coughing, stumbling, his arms cradling a lot of gear, his pale eyes wild in a soot-black, greasy mask.

"My shotgun!" he blurted, dropping to his knees where men huddled or lay, all blood and mud and stupor. Sergeant Schultz had his sack of shells and the shotgun he had bought from a New Delhi sportsman, with weapons so scarce. He pointed it at the shadowy little figures approaching up the terraces, until, in his daze, he recognized them as guerillas by their bare feet and straw hats and fell back with a quivering sigh. It was all a dream, still, in the cave to which Ningan led them, in a hurry to avoid the Japs sure to come soon.

The atmosphere of unreality was a narcotic for Sergeant Schultz and Corporals Drago and Millcamp. The others—Lieutenants Barker and Henderson, Corporal Wills—were in no condition to even ponder the group's desperate plight. Wills was unconscious with a gory shoulder wound. Henderson slipped back and forth over the brink of consciousness, both his legs broken. Lieutenant Barker, the pilot, was dead.

From the small fire on a stone hearth came not only the rice but also a medicinal herb with which the man called Choun-li disinfected the gaping hole he'd cut to remove the bullet from Wills' shoulder, as well as bruises on Drago and burns on Schultz and a gash in Millcamp's thigh. Millcamp was already in a corner muttering to the girl K'hwein and making her laugh, though she understood no English. The lanky Tennessean was making his pitch half-dazed, just as Sergeant Schultz was in a stupor talking to Ningan. They were men of the Air Transport Command, he explained to her, out of Delhi flying supplies over The Hump to Chungking and Kunming,

PLEASE TURN PAGE



In the jungle, the survivors were shunted from village to village—one step ahead of the Japs.



In every town and city they came to while ▶ crossing Tibet, they met with open hostility.

Only the nomadic tribes were friendly, willing to share their food, possessions, even their women with them.



DEATH TREK OF SGT. SCHULTZ

continued

from where new orders had sent them east with medical supplies for the Chinese troops at Shiuchow. As the dead Barker had, Schultz cursed the missing fighter escort from Changsha, and the woman Ningan expressed her opinion of the Chinese Army.

"Kuomintang," she whispered, "no fight soldier Nipponese Jap. Chiang Kai-Shek him officer sell all thing, take men from village make him die, no food, no medicine, him officer sell all thing."

Lieutenant Henderson cried out as Choun-li worked at setting one of the legs. Assisting him, the woman Peng clapped a hand over Henderson's mouth and Ningan said, "No make big sound. Him Nipponese all places him soldier Jap. Him go boom soon, him look Melican flyer find booby trap. Me make bomb in trees, him go boom." She went on with talk that identified her as the leader of this harassment party of guerillas, of which there was no real strength nearby, and explained that the whole area was deserted, the refugees having departed a week past before the Japanese advance.

Millcamp fell asleep with his face against K'hwein's ample bosom. She was around 20, whereas the other women seemed closer to 30, like the two men. They were grim-faced but broke into easy smiles, often for no apparent reason. The man Tzeying kept leaving the cave and returning as the afternoon wore on, and the Americans dozed and awakened into the same merciful atmosphere of half-reality.

Lieutenant Henderson woke while Choun-li and Peng were tying bamboo splints to his legs. He asked Ningan to scour the forest for the medicine crates they had dumped, to get medicine for Wills and Barker. When Drago told him Barker was dead, the Lieutenant said, "Oh," and went peacefully off to sleep. The two officers had been roommates, close friends.

Toward dusk a detonation ripped the outside quiet, then another, and a third. Gunfire rattled nearby. Tzeying grinned, and Ningan said, "Dead soldier Jap him Nipponese dead Jap. More soldier him shoot trees, get fear."

Drago began to retch. He threw up the soggy rice meal and it smelled, but nobody commented on it. The Chinese kept jabbering among themselves softly, laughing a lot right in view of Barker's corpse. It was not callousness but rather a seasoned familiarity with death after so many years of their war. The date was June 2, 1943. They had been fighting Japan for more than a decade.

K'hwein eased Millcamp down to the earth floor and went to sleep beside him. Peng began stroking Henderson's brow when he woke muttering, and got him to sleep once more. Drago was the last of the Americans to fall asleep.

Schultz woke him. The cave was in pitch darkness, full of the hissing breath of sleepers. "Keep quiet. Come with me. Keep your .45 out and the safety off."

Dawn was breaking outside. With his shotgun up and ready, Schultz led Drago out of the woods and up the terraced rice paddy to where the wrecked Dakota was still smoking. From the height, looking down, they could see debris breaking the reflection of light on the paddy surfaces and they went around inspecting the litter blown loose when the plane exploded. Drago, in the hour they searched, found the



While Choun-li tried to set Lt. Henderson's broken legs, Schultz stood guard at the mouth of the cave.

medical emergency kit in its metal machine gun ammunition box. Schultz found two ten-in-one food ration boxes and, on the slope's crest, a running stream in which the two men washed themselves and scrubbed out and filled a charred gasoline drum.

When they got back inside the cave the stone hearth was aglow once again and in its ruddy reflection Lieutenant Henderson was arguing with Ningan. "We *can't* leave here," he protested. "We have three disabled men, including myself."

"Must go," Ningan said, smiling ingratiatingly. "Nipponese soldier Japs him come here. Glorious Melican go north maybe so find flyer Melican. Ningan take him soldier People's Anti-Nipponese Guerilla Striking Force south way behind enemy line Kongmoon. Bring plenty People's Anti-Nipponese soldier find enemy, fight, take nice medicine. You watch out Kuomintang him soldier kill you. Chiang soldier shoot, him think you guerilla, him no shoot Nipponese Jap."

"Get a load of that propaganda," Drago whispered. "Propaganda," Schultz grunted. "It ain't hurting Millcamp none. He likes it." In shadows to the side a blanket covered the Tennesseean and the girl K'hwein.

Henderson said, "We have to chance staying here, Ningan. Find food, things like that. Three men to—"

"No three men," she said flatly. See, we bury one man. See number two man maybe him die soon. You soldier carry one, only you."

There was a fresh grave by a wall and Henderson turned glazed eyes toward it. Then he looked over to where the woman Peng was studying Wills' wound as she ripped his undershirt into strips. "We got some bandages," Schultz said. "We got some food too, lieutenant. We can make it out of here maybe."

Henderson stared as Schultz opened a ration carton, as Drago showed Peng and Choun-li the sulfa, the bandage rolls. Then he drew both arms over his face and let out a long groan of painful grief. "Jimmy Barker," he wailed, remembering. "Jimmy Barker is dead." He began to sob. It was setting in now, the full brunt of shock and despair. Ningan jabbered some swift Chinese and her two men took their rifles and a Japanese sword across to the mouth of the cave, slipped out past the foliage-decked camouflage netting. Ningan bent over Henderson, her face against his, and began to talk.

"Must be of strong will. So we win. Glorious Melican, glorious People's Striking Force, we make strong will. Kuomintang blockade People's Guerillas. Chiang

him fascist like Nipponese Jap, like Mr. Hitler. No sorry him Kuomintang not get medicine. You careful him shoot you. Long live Democratsy."

She went off then and roused K'hwein. Choun-li and Tzeying came back with stout bamboo stalks. While Peng dressed the wounds of Wills and Millcamp (as they slept), the other four Chinese began tying uniform clothes across the bamboo stalks to form a pair of litters. Schultz asked Ningan where the apparel came from and with a broad smile she said, "Him dead Melican, him dead Nipponese soldier Jap, booby trap go boom, make four dead Jap."

She supplied the Americans with that many Japanese canteens, and took her group away after saying, "We go north way find road you go Chenchow maybe. Look-see okay for you. We come back soon."

Wills woke to the smell of frying bacon and in a delirious tone complained of hunger, then slept again before Drago was finished cooking the bacon in a black iron *kong*. They opened a tin of deviled egg to go with it and woke Millcamp and Henderson.

"Go easy on the food," Henderson said. "Schultz, I want you to exercise the strictest rationing. Bare minimums—Lord knows how far we have to go."

Drago muttered, "Or if we'll ever get there."

"Weapons," the Lieutenant said. "What have we got, a few .45's? Maybe these guerillas will let us have . . ." He trailed off to silence, then said, "Oh, Lord, Jimmy Barker. . . ."

"There's my shotgun too," Schultz said.

"Hey," Millcamp called from the side. "We ought to keep those guerillas with us. They'll know the roads."

"What roads?" Drago snapped. "You just want that broad along."

"You ain't just tootin', boy."

Lieutenant Henderson began laughing in a taut, hysterical falsetto. Abruptly, gunfire sounded at a distance outside, single rifle shots and long clatterings of automatic weapons. Schultz bounded up with his shotgun. "You guys sit tight. Your .45's ain't good for much."

"Schultz!" Drago yelled, but the Sergeant went loping for the camouflage net and slipped out.

"Let him go," Henderson said. "He's right." After a pause he said, "He ought to wait for orders, though."

"Yeah, well, you let him have it, lieutenant," Millcamp drawled, "if he comes back, you do."

"I'm not trying to pull rank," Henderson said, "but now more than any other time we need discipline."

The shooting continued at a rapid pace and Wills was trying to sit up, a feverish panic in his eyes. "What the hell is this?"

"It's a war," Millcamp laughed. "A war, boy, and you ain't going back to Ala-BAM!"

"Everybody's going nuts," Drago said. "This is funny, Millcamp?"

"It's a riot, boy."

The automatic fire ceased abruptly and in its void the rifle fire crackled on with a thin brittleness. The men were silent, listening, and in a few moments all was silence outside.

Millcamp was first to speak. He was laughing no longer. "We ain't getting out of here. Two men can't tote no two litters."

"Take it easy," Henderson said. "Don't give up hope that fast."

"I don't have to be carried," Wills said, sitting up. He was young and looked even younger, a small blond man with delicate features and a soft voice. "No, Drago, let me up, let me try. Even if Denny Schultz comes back . . . one man less to carry. . . ."

He managed to reach his feet, with Drago close by him, and walked a few paces, then sank down. "Just a little weak, that's all. No pain—uh-oh, correction . . . correction. . . ."

They waited. In silence, then, they waited a long time but less than it seemed, until the woman Peng came through dragging her rifle, her straw hat down on her back. She walked to the farthest corner of the cave as the men all watched her, and sank down slowly, dead ungleaming eyes staring hypnotically. Then Schultz came through, the shotgun in one hand, the other holding a body over his shoulder. Drago and Millcamp ran to relieve him and in the hearth's glow laid out the woman Ningan. Schultz knelt by her, muttered, "She was alive when I picked her up."

"K'hwein," Millcamp said softly. "That little girl."

Schultz found some shadows to sit in. "Just this one's left. This Peng. They knocked off a dozen Japs before I got there, tommy guns and all. She was sitting over Ningan, tying a Jap bandage over her chest." He came over to the hearth and knelt by it. "Tzeying was her husband. Tried to tell me something about Choun-li and herself but I don't get it. Maybe he was her brother, something like that."

Peng, tall and thin, came and knelt beside Schultz, nodding fervently and smiling, actually smiling, as she said, "Brudda. Choun-li brudda Peng."

"The weapons," Lieutenant Henderson said. "Why didn't you bring back weapons?"

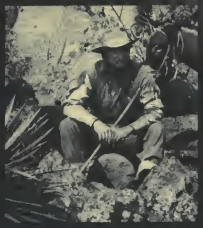
Schultz grunted, said, "Didn't think of it. I'll go back."

"Do it now. Now," Henderson demanded. "Before another Jap patrol comes through. "Look, I don't want to be cold about it, but . . . well, we can take a lesson from Peng here. Look at her. Her husband, her brother, her friends, all wiped out in a few minutes. It's a matter of survival. We have to—"

"Never mind the sermon, (*Continued on page* 40)



Men scrambled out of the tent as Schultz sprayed it with bullets—in short, steady, murderous bursts.



The DESERT RAT and his $20,000,000 CHRISTMAS BONUS

If his boarding house buddy hadn't spotted an item in the paper, Red Carson might never have remembered a patent he had filed back in 1906—a patent that made him and the boys at Mac's multimillionaires.





by Monroe Fry

The hunt for gold had occupied most of George Campbell Carson's life, and now another six months prospecting had proved fruitless. Somewhere in those mountains on the edge of the sun-baked wastes there was gold, but all he had ever found was a little pay dirt panned from some mountain stream.

He wiped the sweat from his neck and packed his worn blanket, pot and pan on Jake, his mule, for the trip out of the Mojave Desert. Sometimes in his loneliness he talked to Jake, telling him what they would do when they struck it rich, and Jake would turn his head and eye Carson soberly, as if he understood every word. Carson would laugh and pat the mule affectionately and talk some more, for in the loneliness of the desert it is good to hear the sound of a human voice even if it is your own.

"There's only one thing I'm real sorry for, Jake," said Carson. "I'll have to sell you when we get back—and that's a shame. I sure hate to do that."

The mule turned its head and looked at him dolefully.

Every year for more than two decades it had been the same thing. Carson worked at a city job to save enough for a grubstake and another try at finding the elusive yellow metal. Over the years his face was burned by the sun and wind, his once fiery red hair turned a burnished copper color, now heavily flecked with grey, and his pale, greenish-blue eyes had the far away look of one who always had distant vistas before him.

Though Carson liked the solitude of the desert he did look forward to the furnished back hall bedroom in a boarding house on San Francisco's waterfront, where he always stayed when in the city. Even in his room he was still the dreamer of the big dream: inventing something the world would want and for which it would shower him with wealth and forever end the need to grub for an existence. In his spare time he made models of things he invented and spent his hard-earned money to take out patents on them. And all that ever came of his search for gold was an ever deepening sun tan, and all he ever got from his patents were bills for attorneys' fees.

Carson arrived in San Francisco with his pack and a few cents and made straight for the boarding house. There he could always get a room without having to pay the $1.50 a week's rent in advance. He would have a place to stay until he got a job and he could always borrow a few dollars from his cronies until pay day. Or, if they, too, were broke, he could always get a little stake from Mac who ran Mac's Place, the corner saloon which was the local hangout and which served the biggest nickel beer and the best free lunch in the West.

"Hey, Red's back!" one shouted, catching a glimpse of him from the parlor window as he approached.

They did not even give him time to take off the bundle on his back before the ribbing began as he shook hands all around. Some of the boarders had lived there for over 20 years and could remember the first time the young Carson left to search for gold.

"Betcha that bundle's full of (*Continued on page* 62)

With the money rolling in, Red moved all his old drinking cronies uptown, into a high-price hotel.



When the guards brought me back, she was sitting on a corner of Breck's desk, smiling mockingly.

Art by Al Kosti



I WENT THROUGH THE GESTAPO'S Fräulein Torture

by Capt. Graeme Panton,
Cameron Highlanders

"You musn't be foolish again, *leutnant*, and no more impertinence, please. I admire Scotsmen. Let's be sensible, and not waste any more time downstairs."

To my surprise, the big man was smiling. Obviously, he had lunched well.

"I think you're going to like the new interpreter," he said in his stumbling English.

He slipped a photograph from a drawer in his desk, slid it across to me. It was a picture of an extremely attractive girl. The big man's high-pitched giggle was ludicrously at odds with his paunchy frame and bullet-head.

"Pretty, yes?" he said, leering, and pressed a button on his desk.

I reacted slowly to this move; it was too much like fiction to be true. Breck—I knew his name from some envelopes on his desk—was staring out of the window when a knock came at the door.

"*Herein*," cried Breck.

My heart skipped a sizeable beat as the girl in the photograph walked in. She was tall, her athletic figure draped in a simple cotton dress with a low, square neckline. Her breasts were firm and rounded, her skin shaded deep gold, her lovely legs bare. Bright-painted toe-nails peeped from elegant sandals.

This girl has good friends in the Party, I thought, for cosmetics were at a premium. It was the closest I'd been to a woman, any woman, for twelve months, and it wasn't easy. Her fine-spun blonde hair hung loose around her shoulders. She wore a blue ribbon in it, the same color as her dress.

Breck kissed her hand elaborately, then turned to me.

"This is *Leutnant* Panton, a Scotsman who tells me he is a prisoner-of-war. Carl has been interpreting for me, but we haven't progressed much. I think you can help us."

"I hope so, *Herr Gruppenfuehrer*."

Her voice made my heart skip again. It was pure Kensington—straight from a Buckingham Palace garden party. Coolly, she eyed me up and

PLEASE TURN PAGE

down, then perched herself on the arm of an overstuffed chair. Crossing her shapely legs, she drew the skirt well above her knees. Her eyes didn't leave mine. What a bitch, I thought, to do this to a man who's been a prisoner-of-war for a year.

"You speak pretty good English, Fräulein," I said. "Perhaps you've spent some time in London?"

"Perhaps."

Breck studied his watch.

"I have a meeting in half an hour, *leutnant,* so I'll come straight to the point. Jennifer (he pronounced it "Chennifer") is English, but she works for me—very efficiently. She is beautiful, *nicht?"*

"It's her morals that concern me, not her looks," I said.

He bellowed with laughter, and his massive paunch shook.

"Her morals! Ah, that is good. You don't have to worry about them. How long is it since you were with a woman, *leutnant?"*

"I told you when I was captured."

Jennifer got up and stood over me.

"One thing I'll tell you, you pompous young ass," she said angrily. "One more insult and I'll have you thrashed till you scream for mercy."

"Won't you do it yourself—"

Before I finished, she handed me a ringing slap across the cheek. I staggered.

"You bloody fool," she snarled.

My Scots blood began to boil.

"Save your temper for your own kind," I snapped. "Get this straight, and translate it for this poor man's Erich von Stroheim: I'm a prisoner-of-war, and he's had all the information he's entitled to. Every minute you keep me in this building or in a civilian gaol is a direct contravention of the Geneva Convention. All right, now get on with your dirty work, whatever it is."

She was shaking with indignation, and looked twice as beautiful as before. She gave Breck a liberal translation, and he began to turn purple. Finally, Jennifer turned back to me.

"You are going downstairs again." Now she smiled. "I'll be waiting for you. Perhaps you'll feel differently when you return."

She lit a cigarette and blew the smoke in my face. Breck was at the door, barking instructions.

"You bloody fool," she said again.

While the lengths of rubber hose-pipe whanged into my jellylike flesh, I gritted my teeth and concentrated on the story. The part I could tell. The part I had to keep silent on. It was the method I had to conceal (whang!) . . . crouched behind the lavatory door with a greatcoat over me, while the guards checked the carriages from which the officer-prisoners had just detrained (whang!) . . . the roll-call on the platform at Ulm and the doubling up of voices that had fooled the Germans (whang!) . . . and—Christ!—if I could keep that much to myself there was a sure escape route for many another P.O.W. before this lousy war was through.

First there had been the Oflag at Laufen, boring but reasonably hygienic. Then there was the move to Poznan, in Poland, to a dank, reeking, underground fort dating from the time of Napoleon. That was a retaliatory measure for alleged bad treatment suffered by German P.O.W.'s in Canada. Finally, there was this move south to Biberach.

I had walked down the line, tapping the rails with a piece of metal, then disappeared into the night. For days I'd been on the "trot," traveling by night, holing up by day. Then I'd come to a barbed wire fence, which I thought marked the boundary between Germany and Switzerland.

But it had been the perimeter fence of a hush-hush factory where Nazi scientists were testing secret U-boat equipment.

There was a confusion of shouting, bullets whizzing past me as I ran, and the smack of a 9mm slug that hit my pack and threw me to the ground. Two brawny, brown-shirted members of the S.A. were on top of me, punching at my head.

"Oh, lord," I thought, before I passed out, "why couldn't I fall into the hands of the Army?"

Then I was marched off to the civilian prison at Ulm, and here I was at Gestapo headquarters. Breck, the fat *gruppenfuehrer,* wasn't convinced that I was a spy, but the circumstances were suspicious enough for him to try and worm a confession from me.

At our first meeting, Breck said he had telephoned the camp authorities at Biberach, and no officer named Graeme Panton was missing.

"That," I told him, "is because my fellow-officers have been covering up for me."

Breck's porcine eyes searched my face.

"We shall see."

The beating was finished. The two thugs led me, like a jellyfish at the point of a knitting needle, up to Breck's office. Breck was gone. Jennifer was stretched full length on the divan, and smiled with gentle mockery as I leaned weakly against the desk.

"Water," I croaked.

"Help yourself."

I gulped two full glasses from a carafe, poured a third over my hands and face. My back was like a furnace.

"Relax, and sit down," she said, without any trace of sympathy.

Keep a clear head, I told myself. If you don't, you might try and kill this bitch.

Her sensuous red lips curved into a smile.

"What's your name?"

"You know it."

"No, silly. Your Christian name."

"Graeme—to my friends."

"Look," she said. 'I don't give a damn for you or your kind. What you've done is your own affair, but thank God I saw this coming in time. Can't you see that England's had it all along the line? Don't you know about the Balkans, Crete, North Africa? Now you've a chance to be sensible.

"No one at Biberach knows you're here, so why not come over to our side? We'll put out a little story that you were shot at the frontier. Then you can relax and enjoy yourself."

She eyed me up and down. "I'd rather enjoy helping you to relax," she added softly.

I went over to where she lay on the divan, her hair loose on the cushion. I felt weak and suddenly dizzy.



They tried to make me say I was a spy—that I'd known what was on the other side of that barbed wire fence when I went to climb over it. The goons tried real hard.



Trembling, I took the cigarette from her hand and inhaled twice before handing it back. As I did so, she gripped my fingers.

"Think it over tonight. I've got to tell the prison to have you back here in the morning. If you don't play ball, there's not a hope in hell that you'll ever see a camp again—let alone England."

"Thanks," I answered. "By the way, I thought nail varnish was *verboten* in the Third Reich?"

"I have a friend," she smiled, stretching luxuriously and wiggling her toes. Her body was superbly bronzed. It was still early June, but she had obviously spent plenty of time in the sun.

"Actually, he's just returned from Paris."

"Indeed? What color shirt does he wear?"

"Now, now, Graeme, don't get personal. But if you're really interested, I'll be dining with him in Munich tonight."

The two thugs downstairs had beaten the strength out of me. I had one weapon left: sarcasm.

"What does your boyfriend do during the day—on duty at Dachau?"

"Oh, you're crazy," she said angrily, rising and going toward the door. Then she regained her slick coating of self-possession.

"I'll see you in the morning, Graeme. Think it over, meanwhile, and think about me . . ."

She was standing with her hands suggestively on her hips as they took me away.

That night I lay in my cell at Ulm prison, as comfortable as a raw beefsteak on a board. When at last reveille sounded, I heard a key grate in the lock. A new warder came in. He saw my back, and looked inquisitively at my belongings and the name on the door.

"Englishman?"

"Scotsman."

"You are in trouble with the police?"

I let my back speak for me. He nodded gravely, a queer little fellow age about 65, with a head too big for his body.

"Tell me the story quickly," he said softly.

I had nothing to lose. All right, maybe it was bait for a trap, but I wasn't giving anything away. I told him.

"I learned English in the last war," he told me. "I was a prisoner, too. I spent two years in York."

Christ, I thought, I hope he was well treated.

"After the war I worked in a hotel in the Strand."

"Did you try to get away, while you were a prisoner?"

He shrugged.

"The food was good, and where should I have gone?"

"You realize it's a soldier's duty to escape?"

"Yes, yes," he said, "but you have come into other hands."

"You're telling me," I remarked bitterly.

The little warder looked at me silently, while I tried to analyze the expression in his eyes. Was it sympathy, or merely curiosity?

"I'll be back again," he whispered.

Half an hour later he was back. He left the cell door open and spoke in an undertone. He had read my case history and emphasized what I already knew: it was the suspicious location of (*Continued on page* 60)



The *Dorienni* ambush turned into a rout when Runnels and his men poured out of the jungle and cut them down like flies.

Art by Harry Schaare

THE TEXAS GUNSLINGER WHO TOOK OVER PANAMA

by Jay Scott

The sidewheeler *Orus*, pride of the United States Mail Steam Line—New York, Charleston, Savannah, Havana, New Orleans and Chagres, two sailings monthly—scraped the Canal Street wharf in New Orleans and prepared to take on passengers. A little man wearing a big white hat and a large bone-handled revolver on each hip approached the gangplank. The heavily mustached purser sneered with ill-concealed dislike.

Two years as purser on the New York-to-Chagres run had nurtured in him an intense hatred for the whole brawling, uncouth lot of gold seekers. They swaggered onto the ship bristling with pistols and wild-eyed with gold fever. In calm weather they cursed, gambled, drank and fought over food like animals. But when a storm blew in and tossed the *Orus* about, they were quickly reduced to sodden, puking wrecks—sliming the decks and fouling their cramped, miserable nests below.

When they died during the voyage, as frequently happened, they were buried over the side. Then the purser could barely suppress a grisly snicker. "There's one the Derienni on the Yankee Strip won't get," he would say to himself with satisfaction.

To the purser, this pint-sized gunman with the bone-handled revolvers standing before him was typical. "Name!" the purser barked, checking his list.

"Randolph Runnels," the small man said. He was young, but there was an old look in his steady gaze and the way he stood with his thumbs hooked in his heavy belt. He was well turned out, almost a dandy, in his starched linen and dark broadcloth suit.

"New Orleans to San Francisco by way of Panama," said the purser automatically. "Two hundred dollars in gold."

"Just New Orleans to Panama," Runnels corrected him quietly. "I intend to remain on the Isthmus for an indefinite period."

The purser almost dropped his list in surprise. Many people remained on the Yankee Strip indefinitely or even permanently, but practically nobody went there with that in mind. The purser took $100 in gold from Runnel's for his passage and issued a receipt. As the small man walked away, his spurs jingling, the purser lapsed into his usual sour mood. "There's another one for the Derienni," he said to himself. "They'll plant him in the Yankee Strip. I wonder what his game is?"

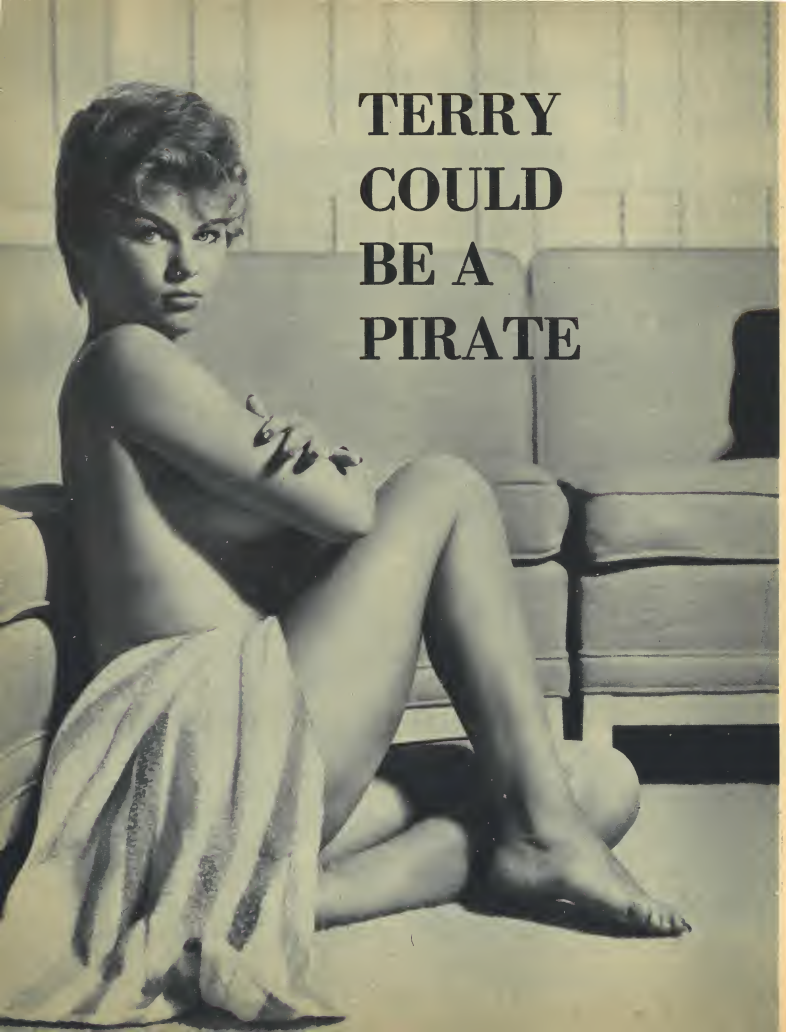
If the purser had been a better judge of men and not confused by his past association with so many loud-mouthed tenderfeet, he would have known that Runnels had only one game: guns, guns and killing. If the purser had been a shore-bound Texan instead of a sea-borne New Yorker, he would have known Mr. Runnels by reputation, if not by sight. At 21, he was already something of a legend. As a member of the Texas Rangers he had fought Indians, Mexicans and desperados. He could have filed several notches on his gun handles had he been the boastful type.

But now in the year of 1851, Texas was becoming too peacable for Ran Runnels. When certain parties approached him about an interesting job on the Yankee Strip, he accepted with alacrity. It was his type of job and there was more gold in it than he could dig with a pick and shovel. Runnels liked gold as well as any man, but he did not want to grub for it.

Beginning in 1849 and lasting for several years afterward, the great American dream was to strike it rich in California. Gold fever was contagious, filling its victims with the desperate urge to get to California and make a pile before all the treasure played out. But the huge bulk of the North American continent was in the way.

The poor and desperate rode in covered wagons behind oxen for months across the deserts, forests and mountains, braving (*Continued on page* 74)

Ran Runnels was "the law" in the Yankee strip, and he enforced it with a gun, a hangman's rope and a band of hard-riding vigilantes.


TERRY
COULD
BE A
PIRATE



Any man would walk the plank for Terry Higgins, but unless he had a horse ranch in his pocket it wouldn't make an impression.

MORE>



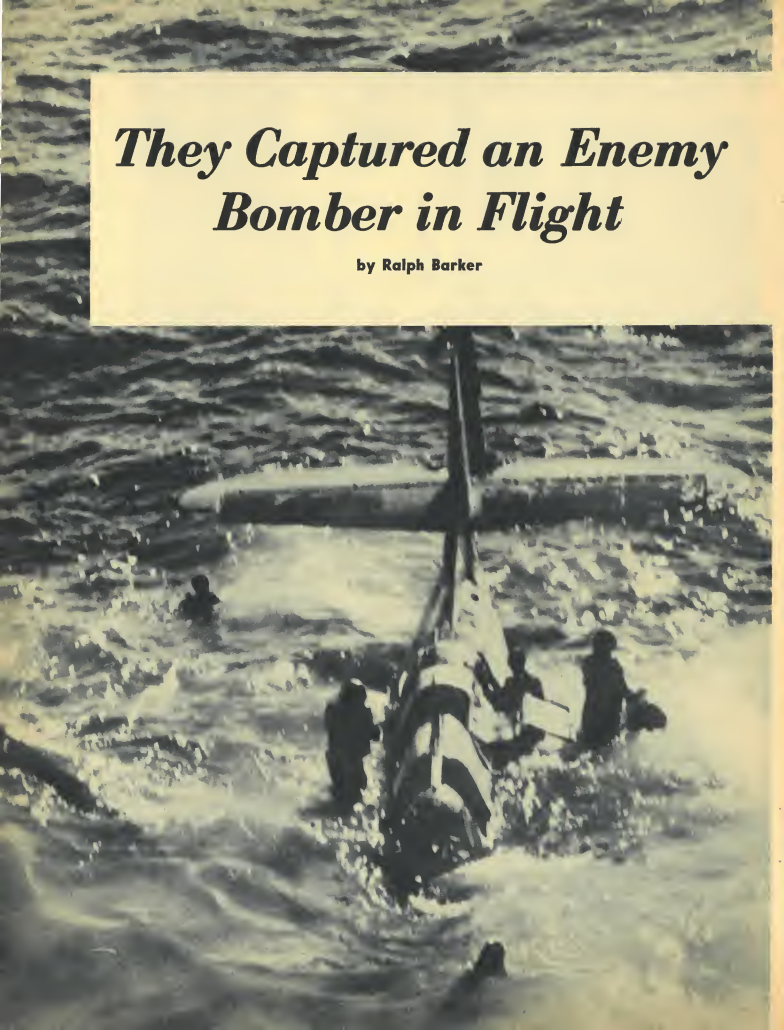


No glamour and high life for her—she wouldn't give a horse hair for a big time modeling or movie career. And she'd rather go riding than marry a millionaire.



They Captured an Enemy Bomber in Flight

by Ralph Barker





To escape, they had to: 1. Kidnap a plane in mid-air; 2. Fly it to Malta; 3. Bring it in before British Spitfires tore it apart.

Strever turned the Beaufort into attack—"Now!" he yelled, and Dunsmore released the torpedo.

When Rommel halted at El Alamein early in July, 1942, after the spectacular advance which brought him from Cyrenaica across the Libyan desert almost to within sight of Alexandria, the real battle for Egypt and the key to the East began—the battle of supplies. The Allies had more than one potential supply-line to Egypt. Merchant ships and troopships took the long route round the Cape and through the Red Sea to the Suez Canal; aircraft flew direct from England via Gibraltar and Malta, or were crated in England and transported by ship to the west coast of Africa, where they were reassembled and flown to the desert airbases. But for Rommel the industries of the Ruhr and the might of the Afrika Korps were joined by a tenuous and vulnerable supply-line across the Mediterranean. R.A.F. torpedo-bombers based at Malta constantly threatened to cut this line.

On 1st July 1942 the Germans began a new and ferocious attempt to bomb the island of Malta into submission. But what the Luftwaffe had failed to accomplish with greater forces against less opposition in the spring, could not be accomplished now. In the first ten days of July over a hundred enemy aircraft were shot down for the loss of less than a quarter that number. By the middle of July the enemy's losses were so heavy that dive-bombing was stopped. Malta was free to continue its vital offensive role in the battle of Egypt.

On 28th July 1942 a Malta-based Spitfire on dawn reconnaissance over the enemy coastline and coastal waters in the eastern Mediterranean spotted an enemy oil-tanker escorted by five Italian destroyers, with air cover, hugging the coastline off the island of Sapienza in Southern Greece, intent on getting out of range of Malta's strike aircraft before cutting across the Mediterranean into Tobruk harbour. The Spitfire turned quickly for home. As soon as the pilot was within R/T range of Malta he called the controller and transmitted a sighting report. At the news nine Beaufort crews on stand-by were called out for immediate take-off.

Beaufort crews in the Middle East were a mixed company. Australians and Canadians were almost as numerous as men from the Old Country; South Africans and New Zealanders were in it too.

To Lieutenant Ted Strever of the South African Air Force, newly arrived in Malta, this was torpedo strike number three. He had for his navigator a Lancastrian, Pilot Officer W. M. Dunsmore, of Liverpool. His wireless operator/air gunners (the Beaufort carried two Wop/A.Gs.) were both New Zealanders, Sergeant J. A. Wilkinson of Auckland and Sergeant A. R. Brown of Timaru. Wilkinson and Brown had been shot down with another crew ten days previously. Their pilot and navigator had been wounded, and they had been recrewed with Strever and Dunsmore.

Shortly before nine o'clock on that July morning, Strever and his crew took off in the formation of nine Beauforts detailed to attack the oil-tanker. It was a hot sunny day and the Mediterranean reflected the sky's pale blue. As they taxied out the aircraft was stiflingly hot, and they were glad when they were clear of the runway and the slipstream rushed in through the free gun hatches on the port and starboard sides. The Beaufort carried twin Brownings in the wings and in the turret, which was half-way along the fuselage, and a single free gun on either side just forward of the turret. Going into action the wireless operator manned these two side guns.

When the nine Beauforts were airborne they formed up into pairs and set course east-north-east for Sapienza. Soon they were skimming along at 160 knots, low over the sea, glad to be clear of the danger of being jumped on by fighters in the Malta area. Dunsmore, Strever's navigator, released his straps and clambered from his seat alongside Strever down into the perspex nose. Brown, on the look-out for fighters immediately after take-off, tested the two free guns and then began a listening watch on the strike (*Continued on page* 66)

From the book DOWN IN THE DRINK by Ralph Barker. Published by Chatto & Windus, Ltd.

They crawled out on the wings, waving wildly at the Spitfires that circled menacingly overhead.



Uncle Sam is being taken by a group of camp followers who will walk down the aisle as often as the traffic will bear.



Jane Malfern's nine sailor husbands had separate rooms in her huge ante-bellum mansion.

Art by SAMSON POLLEN

ALLOTMENT ANNIES: Girls who Marry too Many G. I.'s

by Neil Pritchie

The big Marine stood by the window, smoking a cigarette and watching the girl on the bed. She was half-sitting, half-lying, her long red hair fanned out on the pillow, the sheet drawn up modestly so that only her head and shoulders and one long, lovely leg showed.

"You're wonderful, Alma," the Marine said softly.

" 'Wonderful.' " The girl pouted. "Tomorrow night somebody else will be wonderful."

"Alma! This is different! This isn't just—"

"That's what I mean: it's different. And I'm not ashamed, Hank. But what'll I do when you ship out? Just forget everything?"

"You wait for me, that's what. I don't run the Marine Corps, Alma; I don't run the war. You wait for me, hear?"

"How do I know you'll want to come back to me, Hank? How do I know you won't meet somebody else and—"

He knelt down beside the bed and pulled her into his arms. "I'll come back

PLEASE TURN PAGE



Wide-open towns draw servicemen on the loose, bored and looking for some real excitement

ALLOTMENT ANNIES continued

to you, Alma. There won't be anybody else. We're getting married. . . ."

That week became a scramble of papers to sign, tests to take, and then in the Detroit railroad station Alma's cheeks were drawn with the tense, helpless despair of all wartime brides seeing their husbands off for points unknown.

"Don't go and lose my address," Mrs. Alma Raskovitch murmured as her one-day husband held her close. "I'll be so anxious to hear from you, Hank."

She was anxious to hear from him, all right. Well, not from him personally, but from the United States Government corresponding in behalf of this big Marine she had known only two weeks. And when the official letter arrived at her swank riverside apartment, it came with a batch of others just like it from the U.S. Office of Dependency Benefits, each one representing a man who knew Alma as his wife.

Alma was in business. Her products were a striking body, breathtaking redheaded loveliness, a manner full of charm, and a highly developed talent for love-making. Her rewards were government allotment checks that kept her living in style. To each husband's contribution of $22, Uncle Sam added $28-$50 per husband. The more husbands, the more swank and leisure.

Alma was not the only marrying joy-girl of World War II, but among the countless "Allotment Annies" she was far and away the uncontestable champ. Like the vast majority of them, she operated largely by impulse, without subtlety enough to spread out her aliases at different addresses, or in any other way to ensure herself against the inevitable awakening of the F.B.I.

Picked up soon after her marriage to Raskovitch, she was most cordial and accommodating. When asked to state her name, Alma smiled agreeably, took a deep breath, and began to recite: "Alma Hawkins Lebors Hunt Harper Selgmann Landersen Kafka Lindsay McNabb Finch Zabbo Johnson Furstmann Polack Raskovitch. Oh," she hastened to amend, "Rickner comes first after Alma. I was born with that one."

The Federal men were stunned. The 15-marriage



They find it in honky-tonks and bars, in liquor and brawls. And in "Annies" who prowl with them.

score was higher than their record indicated. "Well," the 30-year-old redhead graciously explained, "not all of them were servicemen. I married the first three way before the war. Another one, too, back then, but somehow I just can't ever remember his name."

"Sixteen, then? You married 16 men without ever getting a divorce."

"I can't be sure. Sometimes you're bound to forget somebody. Maybe there were more."

Within the three short years of the draft, this absent-minded woman had managed to seduce into marriage at least 12 overseas-bound men of the armed forces, was indeed receiving allotment checks from that number to the monthly total of $600. Her closest runner-up in the giddy allotment stakes was blonde and blue-eyed Mamie Ellison, arrested in Columbus, Ohio—not for bigamy, just then, but for drunkenness and disorderly conduct.

This was no sweet and amiable Alma Raskovitch ready to tell all, but her left arm gave her away and she was drunk enough to brag once police discovered the tattooed list of seven heart-enclosed sets of initials, dates, and town names:

L.C.J. Columbus, July, '41
A.O. Louisville, November, '41
M.R.K. Louisville, December, '41
V.K. Norfolk, February, '42
L.P.J. Yuma, June, '42
C.C.H. Yuma, October, '42
E.G. Louisville, January, '43

Mamie's range was wide and her seductions were swift, as the list revealed. When asked the reason for tattooing her conquests where they could be so plainly seen, she laughed and bellowed, "Something to remember them by," as though the allotment checks were not adequate reminders. But once the F.B.I. moved in, the real reason was pumped out of the girl. It was a device by which she could finally get rid of a stubborn husband with luck enough to be kept back from overseas duty. Sooner or later he would begin nagging her about those apparently recent loves flaunted on her arm, and Mamie would accuse him of jealousy, draw him into a bitter argument, and storm furiously out of his life forever.

It was never so with Alma of the warm disposition. She never married a man she (*Continued on page* 54)

At 11:59 A.M., Sept. 1, people were going about their daily business. One minute later, they were running for their lives—with no place to run.

Minnesota DIED on Saturday

by Glenn D. Kittler

At first it looked like rain. All morning great black clouds lay across the southern horizon, and strong gusts of wind sent waves of dry dirt hissing through the Duluth streets. At the railroad station, Engineer Jim Root commented to Fireman Jack McGowan, "She ought to be some storm."

"We need it," said McGowan, looking at the sky. "Hardly any rain this summer at all."

Jim Root nodded. "The woods are dry," he said. "Too dry."

That was the clue, but nobody recognized it. The station master at the St. Paul & Duluth depot had seen the clouds, but he, too, passed them off as a threat of rain. Men at the weather bureau, surrounded by their charts and instruments, glanced out the window and agreed it might rain. And farmers in town for a Saturday's shopping forgot their water shortages at home, the low lakes and the dry creeks, and decided they'd better hurry if they wanted to get back before the downpour.

A few minutes before 1:55, Jim Root climbed into the cab of the Duluth Limited and checked his valves and throttle. Nearby, Jack McGowan shoveled coal into the furnace, working up steam for the rush southward to St. Paul. Jim leaned out his window to await the signal from Conductor Pete Sullivan.

It was September 1, 1894, the beginning of the country's first Labor Day weekend; Congress had just recently passed the law. Trotting down the platform came stragglers who quickly boarded the five-car train, eager to turn the long weekend into a brief vacation. It was a good load: 150 passengers.

At precisely 1:55, Jim Root heard Pete Sullivan's familiar cry: "All abo'd!" Jim waited a moment to give stragglers a chance, then he put his hand to the throttle. Metal wheels screeched against metal tracks. There was a sudden jolt, then the train glided away from the station, made its way through the backstreets of the city, got a glimpse of Lake Superior in the distance, then cut across fields to the southwest, past farms and through the woods.

For Jim Root this was the best part of the trip: he was heading home. Now 51, he had been on the Limited run eight years. He knew every turn by heart, every inch of the straightaways, and except in winter when snowdrifts could make the trip difficult, he never wearied of his twice-weekly round trip through the Minnesota forests. He had never lost the little excitement each time he started southward, knowing that at the end of the run was his home in White Bear Lake, a St. Paul suburb, where he would spend his free hours with his wife and son.

Root was a huge man, tall, heavy-set, muscular. People often called him Big Jim. There was a joke among other engineers that when Jim leaned out his cab window he looked massive enough to topple over the engine. He leaned out the window now and watched the grey expanse of sky up ahead move nearer.

A half-hour out of Duluth the clouds blocked out the sun. Jim waited for the cool-front of the storm to brush against his face. Instead, the air grew strangely hotter. Jim felt grit upon his face. He

PLEASE TURN PAGE



Flames shot out over the lake, and the air was filled with the screams of the injured and dying.

Art by Herb Mott

looked up to see if winds might be forcing the train's smoke-stream downward, and he saw that this was not happening. Then he glanced at the furnace—maybe a draft was sending soot into his face. But this wasn't happening, either.

Jim's disturbed eyes met Jack McGowan's. Shouting above the noise of the engine, Jim asked, "Is it a forest fire?"

Jack shrugged and looked back at the darkening sky. In a few minutes the day was as black as night.

Jim told McGowan, "Better put on the headlight. I can't see."

Back in the cars, Conductor Pete Sullivan was busy lighting the oil lamps. Nervous passengers anxiously watched the growing darkness. They asked Sullivan, "What's going on? What's happening?"

"Probably a brush fire," Sullivan said casually. "We run into a lot of them this time of the year. Everything's all right. We'll be out of it in a little while."

In the engine cab, Jim Root leaned far out of his window. "I can't see any fire," he called to Jack McGowan. "It must be deep in the woods."

"Looks like a big one," said McGowan. "Do you think we ought to go on?"

"We'll go on to Hinckley," Jim said. "They should have a report on it. Then we'll decide."

In the woodlands town of Hinckley early that morning, no one suspected there was a serious fire anywhere nearby. Actually, there wasn't. But many miles away, wind pockets began to form high in the sky and move northward. Reaching the thick blanket of hot air that hung over the Minnesota forests, the strong gusts found weak spots where they could blast through at hurricane force.

Scattered throughout the woods were the brush fires which everyone expected—and ignored. The rush of wind grabbed at the flames and threw them against trees. Ensuing gusts snapped off the tops of burning trees and flung them hundreds of yards forward, starting new fires. In a furious game of flaming leapfrog the fires advanced upon the quiet, unsuspecting town.

Hinckley, population 1200, lay in the triangle formed by the intersection of two railroads, the Eastern Minnesota and the St. Paul & Duluth. Its business was lumber, and business was good. Prosperity made Hinckley bigger than surrounding towns. Traveling salesmen used it as headquarters, frequently filling its five hotels. On the main street were ten stores, a restaurant, a bank, a blacksmith's shop and a few saloons. The town had three churches, a new school and—at the railroad intersection—a roundhouse. At the south end of town was the Brennan Lumber Company, which hired most of the available labor. Adjacent to it was a big yard piled with thousands of feet of treated wood. Along the Eastern Minnesota tracks were two clearings. One was occasionally used as an outdoor warehouse; the other was a two-acre gravel pit from which the company took fill for its roadbed. About two feet of smelly water had accumulated in the pit and people complained about it. Surrounding Hinckley at the town limits was a timber curtain.

At noon, Mrs. Fred Best was returning from her Saturday shopping when she heard the clanging bell of the volunteer fire department. A burst of wind had brought a cloud of sparks over the treetops into the lumber yards. Some of the dry wood caught immediately. Within minutes, the volunteer crews were dumping barrels of water on it. They thought they had the fire under control when, a half hour later, the hurricane winds hit.

A broad sheet of flame shot in from the encircling forests and dumped itself on Hinckley like a tidal wave. Jim Bean, the lumberyard foreman, shouted: "Holy Mother of God!"

Everybody ran.

There was nowhere to go. The entire town caught fire at once. Houses collapsed into embers before people could open the doors to get out. A clerk at the Pine County Bank crammed $12,000 in bonds and $500 in cash into a briefcase, then ran into the street where an embrace of flames killed him instantly—but left the suitcase untouched.

Father Lawler, the parish priest, his cassock covered with sparks, darted among the clusters of stunned people, ordering: "Get to the pit! Get into the water!"

A man whose clothes were on fire shouted: "Father, help me!" Before the priest could reach him, the man died in a kneeling position.

At the Eastern Minnesota depot, Engineer Ed Barry coupled together a train of box cars and coaches. People heard the noise. They rushed to the train and fought to get aboard while Barry was still shuttling the ten cars into position. Already the intense heat was blistering the paint on the cars.

When he was ready, Barry clanged the bell. More people came running. Nobody knew exactly how many were aboard, but the guess later was 400. Barry pulled the throttle. As the train passed the gravel pit. Barry saw that perhaps 125 people were sitting in the shallow water, splashing themselves to cool their skin. Women held their babies almost completely under water to protect them.

A bit further on the train passed the storage clearing. Another hundred people had gathered there. A few of them ran to board the train as it picked up speed; others were too filled with fear to move. From his high position in the locomotive, Barry could see that the woods beyond the clearing were ablaze. Burning pines crashed into the clearing, sending up a shower of sparks that fell upon the people huddled there, setting them on fire.

The train skirted the town and headed into the belt of forest that led to the Grindstone River bridge. A hundred yards from the river Barry saw the bridge tender running toward the train, frantically flagging it down.

"You can't go ahead," the tender cried. "The bridge is on fire."

"Is she out?" Barry asked.

"Not yet, but she'll go any minute. You'll never make it across."

Barry looked over his shoulder. "We can't go back," he said. "We've got to try." (*Continued on page* 79)



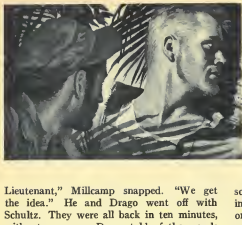
In the terrible heat, the steel rails of the St. Paul-Duluth track snapped free, curling up like strips of bacon.



Hinckley was almost leveled. Hundreds lost their homes, businesses, families; hundreds of others—their lives.



Weeks after the fire, disaster crews were still bringing in the dead; in many cases identification was impossible.



Death Trek of Sgt. "Shotgun" Schultz

Continued from page 17

Lieutenant," Millcamp snapped. "We get the idea." He and Drago went off with Schultz. They were all back in ten minutes, without weapons. Drago told of the woods swarming with Japs, of being lucky enough to withdraw without being seen.

"That's how it is," Millcamp said. "We got six automatics. One shotgun. Peng's rifle, if she goes a ways with us. That's it."

There was more—a dozen American hand grenades that Peng dug out of a corner. With gestures she indicated that they were meant for booby traps, but she had the men each hang a couple on his shirt and hooked a pair to her pants thong. She accompanied them when they departed at nightfall, guiding them west and using her eloquent sign language to convey that the northern route to Chengchow was cut off now, the area no doubt overrun by Japs. Wills insisted stubhornly on walking, which freed manpower for relief in portage. Schultz and Drago carried Henderson on his litter, with Millcamp and Peng carrying supplies and ready to take over on the litter.

The route, aimed at Kweilin and Allied forces, was billy. Frequent rests were necessary. There was a minimum of talk, and at the two long breaks for meals, Lieutenant Henderson admonished the men against eating more than just enough to keep going. Near dawn, Peng scouted ahead on the barren South China hills and at length led the party to a cave, in which they made their camp for the daylight hours. They sank in an exhaustion that was the merest taste of what they were to suffer in the days and weeks to come, for Kweilin—some ten days march at the most—was not to be theirs.

FOR a week it was the same—weary stumblings over rocky crests in moonlight and darkness, daylight camps. All supplies had to be emptied out of the guerilla blankets needed for sleep through the chilly dawns. There were cautious excursions for water to the plentiful streams. For bramble cuts there was iodine in the medical kit that also included, besides the sulfa and bandage rolls, alcohol, peroxide, adhesive tape, tablets of quinine, APC, and codeine. The rations consisted of meat and vegetables, bacon, pork and beans, Vienna sausages, biscuits, deviled egg, coffee powder, fruit drink powder, evaporated milk, processed cheese, chocolate in bars, and bouillon cubes. Cigarettes came with the rations, and matches. It was evident that none of it would last very long, hut exhaustion and not fear of want was the besetting complaint of the men.

Peng kept checking the wounds of Wills and Millcamp, the splint-settings of Henderson. She did more than her share of carrying, and did all the cooking as well, eating only the rice she carried in a small cloth sack, politely declining all offers of American food. In those days she naturally hecame the sweetheart of the party, each man addressing himself to her with some joke or other that she of course did not comprehend, and all of them entertaining ideas about her in the brooding hours before sleep came in some cave. None of them approached her to express his longings.

No man ever met her eyes without receiving a smile from this woman who had lost her kin and comrades at one sweep. It was hard to complain too strenuously in her presence about any such minor affliction as fatigue, let alone hunger or an itchy beard. They plodded on, with the tall, thin woman Peng as their silent symbol of morale. Then on the eighth day she told them that she was leaving them in order to turn south.

It was dawn and they stood above a gorge that was to be their camp in a forested area. Peng pointed to a rise in the mountain to the west and formed her hands into a V to indicate a pass. "Kuomintang," she said and shrugged. "Melican," and a shrug. "Engelesh," and a shrug again. Allied troops, she was suggesting, at the pass. "Kweilin," she said, and began a vigorous nodding, then pointed south, pointed to herself, and said, "Kongmoon."

They made camp, slept, ate, sat murmurously in the overgrowth through the hot hours of light. In twilight they packed again and took their farewells from the woman Peng. She stood watching them climb, as they went into the night for tbe first time without her to guide them.

They had learned silence and kept it until their midnight break for a meal. Lieutenant Henderson said, "We can be proud of the way we rationed our food. How about we break open those Vienna sausages tonight? A celebration. We'll he in Kweilin tomorrow."

Nohody protested, and the sausages, even cold, were a treat.

"How you feeling, Wills?" Schultz asked as they got ready to push on. "That shoulder."

"Tell you the truth, she burns. Sbe burns all the time. I'm just about ready for that Kweilin hospital bed."

"Let's keep our voices down," Henderson said. "We aren't there yet."

They climhed the forested slopes on into the dawn—and into disaster. In the first pale hint of daylight a voice broke the silent air like the crack of doom. It was clearly Oriental and beyond doubt a challenge. Only a few seconds of their shocked silence passed when a burst of automatic fire came cracking overbead. They dropped flat and Henderson stifled a painful cry. Millcamp and Drago were manning the litter and were up before the next gunfire crashed around them. Schultz got in tbeir way and said, "Don't run, you'll kill yourselves. Just move, move fast!"

He pusbed through saplings and weeds with the others panting behind him. Rifle fire joined tbe tommy gun that chattered after them. "They're shooting wild," Schultz hissed, "don't panic! Just keep a steady pace back the way we came. Spread out, move off, Wills!"

VOICES came from the shadows behind them and they were Japanese beyond a doubt. The gunfire multiplied, slugs snapping the air close hy. "They're gaining!" Henderson said from the litter. "Listen . . ." He fell silent. "Listen," he said again as they moved on in the clatter of passing slugs, and he was choking up over words trembling in his throat. "Put me down," he finally got out. "Put me down and run! Run! Run!"

"Pay him no mind!" Schultz barked. "Keep moving!"

"Put me down! That's . . . that's an order!"

They did it. Irresistibly, Millcamp and Drago set the litter down in the brush, panting, muttering past Schultz's cursing. Henderson said, "Another .45. Leave me another automatic."

Millcamp passed it to him and all of them were running, Schultz still carrying tbe dwindled supply blanket. They separated by instinct and went plunging their own ways into the woods. Gunfire came in bursts, prohing. Then a grenade went off and men were screaming, more guns sounded, another grenade, more screaming, and a deadly silence.

Down in the draw where they had taken their last rest, Drago went down under the weight of a man and pitched over swiftly with his automatic pointed as the heavy boom of .45 fire began pocking the dawn. "Drago!" he yelped instead of firing. It was a miraculous impulse. It was Millcamp on top of bim; the lanky man rolled away.

A roaring shot burst over the crackling rifles and over the pounding pistol shots of Henderson. "Schultz cut back," Drago stammered. "It's that blunderbuss of bis."

The shotgun went off again and the forest was alive with jabbering voices, men pouring into pursuit. One grenade and another burst and tbat made four, all Henderson and Schultz had. "We got to go back there," Drago said.

There was a scream, a higb bleat of

terror. The whole night went still around it. The scream broke up into a blood-curdling hrace of sohs, then came together again in an ascending shriek of flat and naked agony.

"Henderson!" Millcamp gasped. "Henderson!"

"Move off," Drago panted, "move off! That's why he made us put him down, so we could get out of here and save ourselves!"

"Wills! Where is he? Schultz! We can't leave them."

"Don't get like that! You got to keep going, I tell you. They got to move hack, too. Come on."

Daylight came up to meet them from the east. Far off the hollow rumhling of artillery sounded, mounting as the two men plunged down the slopes the way they had come through the long night, their destination the rocky gorge in which they had camped the day before. When they reached it Wills was already there in a clump of shruhs, the noon light hathing him in shafts falling green through the heavy dome of trees. It seemed he was asleep, hut a closer look at his distorted position showed him to he in a dead faint. When Millcamp rolled him over, the little man's wounded shoulder was wet with fresh hlood.

Drago opened his shirt. The bandages were gory. "It opened on him, the wound. What are we gonna do?"

"He panicked. He kept running. He'll die on us." Slowly, Millcamp turned to gaze at Drago. "Schultz must have got it. That shotgun of his never went off, once Henderson started screaming. We're all gonna die, Drago boy. There's no way out of this."

"Take it easy. Just take it easy. Figure some angle."

THEY sat flanking the unconscious Wills, surrounded hy barren hills infested with Japs, a day's march out of Kweilin. Schultz found them that way, so lost in their hopelessness that he was standing over them, close enough to lop off their heads, before they looked up. He had his shotgun in one hand; the other held the supplies hlanket over a shoulder.

"I'm gonna rest," he said, dropping the supplies. "Then I'm trying to get through that pass to Kweilin. You guys can come along, but I'll shoot the first of you who acts counter to my command."

"Penny," Millcamp said, "look at old Wills. He's dying."

"There's the medicine. Start working on him. Drago, you take the bacon can up that way and hring water back. There's a spring."

"That an order? I'm not volunteering."

"That's an order." Schultz fell rather than sat down, dug his nails deep into his ruddy short heard, scratching hard. "Everything I say is an order from here on in. You don't like it, take off. But do it like now, when there's no Japs. Run out in a fight and if I live through it and find you, you're dead."

He went to sleep. Millcamp and Drago looked at each other, said nothing, then proceeded to do as Schultz had ordered. When he woke they had just finished with Wills' new handage. Wills had not regained consciousness. "Take that Jap sword," Schultz said. "Cut hamhoo, make a litter. Then you can sleep." He rolled over.

They nibhled what was left of the pork and heans and at dusk struck south. Schultz was sure the Japs had no extended line but only a mohile unit about company strength ranging across the approach to the Kweilin pass. To the north the mountain towered, and a valley ran south; it seemed the best route and it proved to he just that, for they encountered no enemy and climhed the heights two days later in a void of despair that for them amounted almost to high spirits.

Their feet were sore and swollen heyond the curative powers of streams they waded in the night. Wills could not stay conscious for more than short minutes at a time, during which he did nothing hut apologize for his helplessness. He kept tremhling despite the daytime heat and Schultz had him wrapped in the hlanket, the medical kit and few tins of rations riding the litter with him. At nightfall of the third day (the twelfth day since leaving the original cave of the guerillas) they left the last edges of a sparse forest and climhed the naked slopes, going north again toward the pass. There they heard an approaching motor and Schultz ordered the party down flat amid the rocks. "Millcamp, you stay here with Wills. There must be a road down there. Let's go, Drago."

Beyond crags and around a knoll they descended toward a narrow mountain trail and waited there in shadows, listening to the slow, gingerly hum of the car coming toward them. Soon it came hy, an American jeep bristling with helmeted men. Schultz leaped up, whispering anxiously, "You see it? That little sun thing—Chinese Army, man!" The jeep was creeping hy below them, a mere twenty yards away, and Schultz was running, stumhling and leaping up again, yelling now, "Hey! Hey! Americans! Americans up here!"

A voice barked commands and gunfire thundered on swift flaming tongues. Schultz fell, Drago hit the ground. The jeep sped on. Another motor sounded, approaching. Schultz was up, his shoulder against a tall rock, and Drago leaped to help him push it tumhling to the road. Another boulder and another and the jeep was coming on, the second Chinese Army jeep, and rocks were tumhling down to hlock the road.

The jeep, coming slow, eased to a stop and men scrambled off it as Schultz, lying low, called out, "Americans! Americans! We need help! Help! Help!"

Again gunfire was the reaction and Drago yanked Schultz hack in a run up into the dark shadows of rocks. More vehicles were on the way and Chinese soldiers were the pursuers now, firing rifles and yelling. Again Schultz screamed for help, protested that he was American, and this time a voice called hack in English: "You lie! You Communist!" It was an officer who then harked orders in Chinese and the gunfire pounded.

DRAGO, running uphill with Schultz, pulled the pin on a grenade, let the handle fly off, counted to three and heaved it, slamming Schultz down until the detonation sounded, then got up running with Schultz cursing hitterly behind him. The night was still; there was no pursuit, and in a few minutes the pair of them were hack with Wills and Millcamp. "That grenade fixed us for good," Schultz panted. "Now they're sure we're Red guerillas, or even Japs!"

"Don't get on me," Drago snapped, fighting for hreath. "We're alive! My grenade did it! I hope I killed the rats!"

Millcamp wanted to know what happened. Schultz said, "Later, later. Now spread out. Keep your automatics ready. I guess you're right, Drago."

They spent the night there amid the boulders while vehicles passed at the distance below and then silence told them the convoy was gone on to Kweilin. They spoke in whispers, filling Millcamp in, recalling Peng's warning against the Kuomintang.

Just after dawn they saw the Chinese Army. Not the transport unit that had attacked them but the foot soldiers. In yellow or green cotton rags of a thousand different shades they came streaming along the mountain trail with well-uniformed



officers goading them along. They limped on bare legs full of running sores, they coughed, they fell and were kicked off the road hy the boots of angry officers. They scratched, they pounded at bodies apparently lousy and flea-ridden. Very few of them carried rifles. Others had pitchforks, or bamboo spears, or nothing at all. They were dying men.

From their vantage point on the heights, Millcamp said, "We could fall in with them, couldn't we? They sure wouldn't shoot us."

"Why wouldn't they?" Schultz said. "The officers. Just to sell what we got—our beat-up shoes, our miserable weapons."

"And if they didn't kill us," Drago said, "they'd give us disease. Look—dysentery, see them? Typhus, those guys falling all over themselves, and malaria—everything."

"Malaria," Schultz murmured, "that's what it is. Wills. He must have malaria. We have all that quinine and we never . . ."

THEY returned to the trembling Wills and proceeded to administer the quinine tablets. Schultz, meanwhile, spoke of trailing back the way those Chinese were coming, south and west to Kunming, unquestionably an American base. "If that rabble could get through, there can't be any Japs west of here. It's our best het."

It seemed reasonable, everybody agreed, and of course they were all delirious, half-mad, raving: Kunming lay almost a thousand miles away over the mountains!

They crossed a river and came to a village of skeletons and half-starved dogs. The rotten flesh still hung from bones here and there and in packs the black emaciated beasts foraged. They went on, the men, aware they were in famine country deserted by the living; they went on, half-mad, their last crumbs of food dwindling and finally vanishing altogether. Wills began to walk, with the others too weak to carry him. One grain of sanity remained to Schultz, he forbade drinking from any other source than springs. In that wilderness no tree existed for fruit or bark to serve as food, no animal roamed save the dogs of the hamlets.

The men ate insects of a dozen varieties. Then they ate the dogs, roasting the flesh nearly black. They had veered due south toward green hazes in the terrific distances they could see from the heights, south for the lowland jungles where fruit must grow, where animals must roam. They went with Wills leaning on one another of the three and on certain weird days managing on his own without chill, with some unaccountable returned strength. He took quinine sparingly, ate insects and an occasional dog with the others. The days swept them along on bleeding feet into the soft rains that promised the summer monsoon and told them that July was the time of their doom.

There was pandanus fruit like pineapples with a wooden meat. There were trees, and gigantic black ants that stung their feet. And once again a rice paddy, worked by little men who came, then, with great curious eyes to carry them to straw cots, darkness, and sleep. Then the food—fine dry rice with brown fried chopped pork in a sweet sauce and hot tea. There were eggs and sweet potatoes. Even river fish, curried. And then more walking before the senses were fully restored, sleep in another village, more food, more walking. Always one man leading them, bronzed and full of smiles in his straw topee, warning of Japs everywhere in the region.

The monsoon was sweeping wind and torrential rain across the country when the Americans—even Wills—went clear-headed into the jungle with Mr. Chung. They had two British haversacks full of food and matches in an oilskin sack and several long cheroots. They wore Chinese peasant pants and jackets in place of the rags stripped from them by their rescuers. And Mr. Chung spoke an admirable English in which he pointed out that they must move forever from village to village to avoid the Japanese patrols they had already seen several times from helfry hiding places.

"In each village," he said, "there will be a representative of the People's Guerilla Force to guide you on." They sat taking a midnight repast in the hut of a plantain farmer who served them rice wine and sat guard by his door. "With luck you will at last reach Burma. There the British under General Wingate hold the eastern sector. We are presently near the city of Taiping. Burma is but a month west."

Schultz nodded in the dim candlelight. "That's a better prospect than saying it's over five hundred miles."

Wistfully, the chubby man said, "I wish we had communication with your people. It seems a pity to have you by-pass Kunming, hut as you have seen, the so-called Chinese Army of Chiang is corrupt and hostile. They are interested in Japs."

Short Mr. Chung became tall Mr. Soong, and then it was Li, Foochun, Wu, a succession of affable leaders all popular with the natives, whose paddies and fields they nurtured with new scientific processes. The smiling natives gathered to watch the Americans eat, bathe, sleep, and finally at Mengtze there was a hospital, for which Wills was again ripe. In its cellars quarters were made for the Americans, and nurses came often to minister to the feverish Wills.

Thunder crackled outside and one day it erupted into a monstrous roar that indeed turned out to be shellfire and the detonation of mortar shells. Doctors and nurses and patients crowded down in the subterranean chambers. The talk was of a thousand guerillas sweeping down on the Japanese garrison that held the railroad depot. At once Schultz took up his shotgun and made for the stairs. Drago and Millcamp ran behind him, unarmed. A dozen times Schultz had requested weapons, only to be politely turned down by guerillas in dire need of armaments themselves.

At the height of the afternoon, rain made a twilight vista everywhere and through it Schultz followed the *thump-thump* bark of a mortar until he came around a building and saw the emplacement—half a dozen runty Japs hauling shells and firing them in a kind of mechanical cadence.

He sent Millcamp around behind them, saying, "Main thing is to see if they got any support this far back. Probably not, so if you ain't back in a minute I'll figure you to be right there—see that yellow mud building? Soon as I cut loose, you start hitting at them with your .45. Oh, bahy. Drago, you slip over by that fence, that go-cart, there. They come after me, you got them."

That was it. The small arms fire was sounding at least 500 yards ahead. Another mortar could be heard above the din but it was nowhere close. Drago, from his position, caught a nod from Millcamp, and passed it along to Schultz who knelt, lifted his shotgun fondly, and pounded off his shot. Buckshot hit into each of the six Japs, though only one stayed down, apparently dead. The others went reeling, slapping at bloody faces, screaming, then springing into action with drawn weapons. Two with pistols ran the wrong way in their hysteria and Millcamp had his action, picking them off with two shots, then two more to make sure. Drago shot the dead at a distance of three yards. The other two ran squarely into Schultz's second shotgun blast and dropped straight down, as though struck on the head with a sledge hammer. Racing by, Drago scooped up a submachine gun and Millcamp took a long perilous moment to pluck the loaded clip magazines out of the corpse's battle jacket.

Schultz went charging past Millcamp and came hack to them with his arms hugging a mighty load—the mortar, six heavy shells, and his shotgun. "I couldn't get any firing bags!" he lamented over small arms fire growing louder, and Drago pushed him back toward the hospital, chattering a panicked gibberish.

"They're coming," he panted once on the cellar stairs. "A million Japs—I saw them coming right on the street!"

The sight of Japanese armaments struck terror into the medical staff. A doctor begged the men to follow him upstairs, where he picked random cots and had them bury the mortar, the shells, in this straw mattress and that one. "No, not the tommy gun!" Drago cried. The doctor nodded, ran them downstairs again.

"You must go at once," he said. "The guerillas, they go soon. They strike and vanish. The Nipponese will search. Everywhere."

Wills was already dressed for travel, protesting good health to nurses gathered solicitously around him. Schultz and Millcamp each took a haversack. Drago kept punching the submachine gun, fixing the steel magazine in place and out again. "Here's the safety," he grunted, "here's the magazine catch. I'm a genius when it comes to guns. Let's go!"

WITH a young peasant along as guide, they plunged into the rain and ran around a corner, straight up behind a gang of helmeted Japs dragging a field piece across a dirt avenue toward a long finger of the jungle.

Schultz's shotgun boomed and Drago let out a yell and racketed a long tommy gun burst as both Millcamp and Wills pumped .45 shots on the run. A half dozen Japs were dead without returning a shot. Drago threw the spent magazine among the bodies and clicked a full one in place, and into the jungle they ran, deep where the birds shrieked against the steaming rain.

In a week of jungle trekking, the rains turned into vague drizzles and finally ceased; August was ending and with it the monsoon. Then the jungle itself began to go sparse and, where it faded away before the foothills of a towering westerly mountain range, the peasant guide, Ho, took his leave. He spread his hands to encompass every direction and said, "Here, all Jap. All

Jap go hy all same way." According to him they had crossed a section of Indo-China and then another, and everywhere the Japs awaited them, though none came to trouble their river camps. The journey was without incident other than foot trouble and insect-bites that left scabrous sores over them all and for Wills an occasional relapse into fever.

After shaking hands all around, Ho said, "Him Burma come hy plenty soon you go mountain." Cheerfully he waved them off, ducked under a leafy rubber plant and vanished into the jungle.

Schultz said, "Never thought we'd go over The Hump on foot, hut there she is. How you feel, Wills?"

"Great. Never better."

IT was his last time to say anything like it. The fever struck that evening as they made early camp. First a slight chill came over him and he drank a lot of hot tea, hut it didn't help. Within an hour he lay quaking from head to toe in his blanket, swallowing one quinine tablet after another. At length he slept, but fitfully, and it was he who finally woke the others at midnight for their march out of the jungle.

The increasing elevation did nothing for Wills, and the third day into the hills he collapsed and had to be carried, once again a burden to slow their progress. But they had become hard men over the months, no longer given to idle complaints that would avail them nothing. They cut vines and made a carrying hammock, taking turns under the hurden, with Wills, in his despair, the only one to comment on it all.

As the woman Peng had taught them long ago, they made their camps whenever possihle in a cave, and never on high ground. They spoke frequently of Peng, of women in general, with huried, smoldering hungers. Somehow, they could not locate a single village amid the craggy ranges they ascended, and food hegan to be a problem. They had tea and sweet scones to nihhle on, and some dried fruit preserves to keep them going until they could bag some game.

The going was bitter and almost futile with Wills showing not the slightest sign of recovery for over a month in a total wilderness. There were hungry days in camp, and chill, hope-destroying nights of travel. Then Schultz's shotgun brought down a strange, horned, blue-gray animal much like an antelope [*nilgai*], and a holiday was called for three days of leisure and top quality food in a cave.

After that they had dried meat to carry them in the descent, finally, into Burma. Their hearts quickened at the Mengtze hospital, were long and scraggly again. Their eyes were sunk deep in hlack sockets. Millcamp had a twitch at the left corner of his mouth. Drago whimpered in his sleep. Schultz muttered to himself constantly. Wills trembled violently, hardly ate, and weighed no more than 50 pounds. Every morning after a sleep from the pre-dawn hour, Millcamp pronounced him dead, and Schultz, investigating, always said, "No. We'll have him at a British hospital soon. We ain't giving him up after two months of this."

Then, on one such morning, when they had stopped in a jungle that climhed the mountain to enclose them, Drago said,



"We don't serve miners."

"Listen, where are the British, anyway? Where are we, anyway?"

"We're in Burma," Schultz muttered ahsently, and laughter charged out of Millcamp, then out of Drago. They slept on the fact that they were in Burma, though they had no idea where in Burma.

When they woke, Schultz was sobbing, huddled over Wills, his shoulders hucking as if heyond his control. Wills was dead. The original party was cut in half now; they had lost three men, and this one they had to hury. They covered him with rocks and stones and hits of turf. Millcamp took Wills' automatic and now carried two. Schultz said, "I wanted to save that kid." That was the last that was ever said ahout it.

This jungle was the thickest they had ever seen. Schultz hacked through hamhoo until he found a path and in they went, only one haversack remaining to them and that for the paltry medical supplies alone, for they were without food and the jungle would have to feed them.

It gave them mangoes, and near an ahandoned wreck of a native village a citrus orchard flourished. There was plantain to try and small game darted hy frequently, monkeys jahhered overhead, hut Schultz forhade any firing, sensing the presence of Japanese. Without discussing it, the three vagahonds quit forging ahead at a peculiar clearing where the jungle had hegun to grow in so that shrubs gave immediate cover while taller growths and trees formed an enclosing wall on all sides.

The stopover hegan with a normal afternoon encampment, hut continued for one day and then another with no one suggesting an advance. A week passed, a second and a third, with the three of them sleeping more than they had at any single time, foraging for food, sunhathing where sudden dazzling beams broke the dark jungle gloom.

A month passed hefore they departed, clothes scrubhed clean at a nearby brook, each of them possessed of a former, and all hut forgotten, vitality. It was early December hy the random count of days Drago had tried to keep. Through a break in the jungle they reached a cliff's edge and saw, down helow, a hroad river glinting in the overgrowth. It was the Salween but they called it the Irrawaddy.

Whatever the name they gave it, they were geographically correct in placing it at that eastern side of the Burmese midland hulge, and knew they must follow it south to reach General Wingate's troops. They started out at noon, slicing through a trackless jungle with the Japanese sword still with them since China. It was hrutal work that led them to no trail until dusk, when voices reached them carrying swift terror—Japanese gihherish full of joking, full of arrogant confidence.

THEY fell hack, unseen hy the squat little men making hivouac on the opposite side of the trail. Japanese hy the score and maybe hy the hundreds. Vehicles, set apart from one another hy ten yards or so, were all pointed south. "We got to get through," Millcamp whispered anxiously.

"Let's figure it," Schultz responded. There were weapons carriers with 37 mm. field pieces latched to the rears. No movement of amhulances indicated the end of an engagement, so it could only mean . . . "An attack," Schultz said. "Or a shift to a new sector. An advance anyway, not a retreat. We're gonna hold them up."

"Schultz," Drago groaned, "don't lose your marhles."

They drifted farther hack into the shadows. Birds cawed disconsolately. "They're prohably holding everything north," Schultz mused aloud. "We can't beat them south. Only way is through them and down to the river."

"Or we can wait for them to move out," Drago said.

"Who knows when that'll be?" Schultz scraped fingers in his beard. "Three grenades we got. If we can slip through to the other side of them. . . ."

They lay there planning. On into the night they discussed the role each would play. They listened to the Jap mutterings, and they waited for the attack that would indicate that the whole outfit had gone to bed. Then they separated, each with a grenade. Schultz moved back and then a little north. Drago went to the edge of the path at one point and Millcamp at another. While Schultz waited, the other two made their crossing into the Japanese camp. There were no moving sentries. Both men got through to the far side of the bivouac area.

Schultz started it. From the edge of the path he heaved his grenade into the rear of a weapons carrier and fell back into the jungle. When it went off he was north the distance of a second truck and loosed a shotgun blast into it. The best of luck was with him, for the grenade did the job he had hoped for: it sent ammunition off in a clattering din of mayhem.

The Japs were screaming in panic when the second grenade went off in their midst and the third followed farther south. Submachine-gun fire raked the Japs here and .45 slugs there, and shotgun pellets tore among them as they set up a wild and targetless fire. The three tramps kept shifting positions in their allotted areas and made it seem like an attack in strength and even an encirclement, then abruptly fled while Japanese fire—intended and also from the flaming ammunition truck—set the night alive.

Gunfire was still alive when Drago reached the river half an hour later. It sounded in short, erratic bursts that indicated a failing of morale up the road and perhaps a heavy casualty toll. Drago pressed north at a careful pace and found Millcamp, his hand clamped over his mouth to stifle hysterical giggling. Schultz arrived within moments, and showed them fresh blood on his Japanese sword. "One of them spotted me," he said.

The river was broad, running full after the recent rains. Schultz wanted to cross at once. "They won't be down after us tonight," he said, "but they'll have more guts in the morning."

SOUTH a distance they came upon a demolished bridge. With tedious effort they uprooted three puncheon logs half the width and as tall as a man. Lying abreast them, they paddled themselves across and hauled the split logs ashore and into the jungle undergrowth, out of sight. The jungle was still. They rested there, and agreed to go south at dawn, then separated and took cover for their sleep.

In the first light they found huge red berries and feasted on them, then moved south just inside the edge of the jungle for an hour until they came upon a trail that veered deeper into the gloom but continued south. Once again voices stopped them, but this time without terror. They were women's voices, full of laughter. Millcamp was all for plunging ahead, but the others held him back. Slowly they advanced. Around a slight bend they saw four young women in nothing but skirts, preening themselves where the river swelled to form a pool.

They sat on a flat boulder that rose out of the pool, combing each other's hair and chatting. Again Millcamp had to be restrained. Drago held his arm, and Schultz beckoned them both into the jungle, where they squatted to talk.

"Man," Millcamp whispered, "they're just begging for it."

"Looks that way, don't it?" Schultz said. "That's why we ought to wait. It's suspicious."

They could see the girls and, watching them, grew more suspicious. After glancing around defenselessly in all directions, one of the girls removed her skirt and slipped into the pool. Another followed. Both came out and sat naked as the others combed their hair. Then the other two slipped off their skirts and splashed into the pool while the first pair drew on their skirts again. Over and over they repeated the performance.

An hour passed in which the girls rested shortly between dips, combing each other's hair. They were small, but looked Chinese rather than Burmese, and that made it all the more suspicious. They were lovely, full-breasted, and that made it almost impossible for the men to stay put. But then the sounds of approaching men, the crack of twigs, muted voices talking in Japanese, settled their quandary.

The Yanks flattened themselves in the shadows and soon feet shuffled by—one man, another, a third. The fourth pair of legs came in view as a loud, gleeful cry sounded. A high Japanese burst of talk and then they were running for the girls who squealed and scrambled away. The Japs were yelling raucously and charging in their arrogance—charging, as the Americans rose to see, into a mighty eruption that blew them up in a geyser of blazing smoke and dirt. Then two little men appeared swinging three-foot machetes wherever a sign of Japanese life twitched or sighed. The girls were pulling jackets on while two other native men came out of hiding to watch the slaughter.

The men all wore colorful long tunics and headbands, more brilliant than the rough blue and black skirts and short open jackets of the girls. They chattered excitedly, one of the newcomers explaining, apparently, as he bauled in a long rope, the process by which he had engineered the detonation. The three Americans walked into their midst grinning broadly but displaying their weapons prominently. The natives had only the shortest instant in which to be startled, and then they broke into happy and immediately endearing giggles.

"Good day, *Duwa*," the little man coiling the rope spoke up as the other natives fell to gathering up a Jap rifle here, a canteen there, an ammunition belt blown clear. "Me *Naik* Ugwa Win, go from north teach booby all mountain. This Lesu people, me teach booby."

He waited for Schultz to introduce himself, then hurried the entire party deep into the jungle where, amid the shrieks of unseen birds and a hundred other animal voices, he settled them all down for a talk.

He was a Jinghpaw as was the other man with a long blade, or *dah*. All the others were local Lesus. Also in these hills, stretching north, were the tribes of Maru, Lashi, Nung, and Atsi—all of the redoubtable Kachin people in a Mongolian breed, uniformly five feet tall and the most effective and perhaps savage guerillas in the whole China-Burma-India theater. Back in Delhi the three Americans had heard of them, but had not known of their fundamentally gentle ways.

Schultz left out the complicated details of their six months and more since the crash of their Dakota. He told of losing three men, and of killing Japs, and of trying to reach Allied troops. Ugwa Win advised him to come north rather than to head south where the Japanese were thick on the open terrain. Reluctantly taking farewell of the Lesus, the three Yanks followed the two Jinghpaws up the Salween, toward a mixed heaven and hell of convivial people and more months of horror, anxiety and heartbreak.

THAT first night they came to a Maru village where a clearing had not long ago been cut into the deep heart of the jungle. The houses, woven of bamboo poles and leafs, were built on stilts and set against a slope. All seemed to be on fire, smoke rising from one or more interior fireplaces, or *daps*. The headman took the Americans to a particularly long house where an elderly couple welcomed them with the same flashing grins they had received on all sides. Here they were led before a fireplace where several young men and women had gathered, a special fireplace that Ugwa Win called the *Nla Dap*, which he translated as "the meeting place of the young people." The profoundly considerate headman had seen to it that young people came to the Yanks.

The meal consisted of a sweet and sour beef with bamboo shoots on a bed of rice. With it was served, in bamboo goblets, a rice beer called *saku*. Ugwa Win, a man of about 40, stayed as interpreter behind the paper screen set up around the young Americans and five young Kachin women, two young native men. Beyond were other lit *daps* and laughter and talk was loud. Talk, like the smoke, drifted throughout the long house. The young people communicated, through Ugwa Win, mostly about American cities, and after about an hour Ugwa Win took his leave. There was no longer a conversational way of communication. The two young Kachin men each singled out a girl and drifted off to a dark corner, unabashed. Of the three girls remaining only one wore a shirt under her short open Kachin jacket. All wore huge amber loops through their ear lobes.

Schultz was the first to break the embarrassing silence by taking a girl off to a corner. Then Millcamp took the one with the shirt. Drago joined the last girl in the shadows behind the flat *dap* bed of coals. The house was silent but for the rhythmic breathing of sleep on all sides, a soft murmur here and there.

The following night an Atsi village showed an identical hospitality. Then breakfast, of fruit-soaked cold rice and hot tea, served by the girls and afterward the three Yanks followed Ugwa Win and his fellow Jinghpaw west through the jungle morning. Toward noon he held them up. "Now Jap," he said tensely. "Cross famous road now, go my willig, plenty Jap here."

The famous road was, of course, the Burma Road, cut here at the border early in the campaign, making it necessary for just such men as these Yanks to fly supplies

over the Himalayas to Chungking and Kunming and points east. In a gingerly advance to the jungle edge they came to the road. It was far from the majestic structure the Yanks expected, hardly more than a rock-bedded trail. "We ought to wait for night," Schultz said.

"No, now best. Bird scream, monkey. Big noise. No noise night. Now best. Jap eat now."

Ugwa Win had them pass across one at a time, a minute apart—his man first, the Americans next, himself last. They got through and made a hasty advance into the jungle—and into a nest of Japanese!

There was a path they followed and around its first hend, just beyond a tangle of leafy vines, the Japs sat eating in a clearing, a full squad of at least a dozen. Both sides saw each other simultaneously and at once Schultz cut loose with the shotgun.

The Japs were lightning-fast and their rifle fire hurst promptly as Drago's tommy began chattering as he ran. A Jap grenade blew up in the midst of the running men and Ugwa Win let out a cry that broke off at its height. Millcamp was blasting from both automatic backward as he broke into the jungle just behind Drago, when another grenade exploded and knocked him backwards in half a somersault. He rose laughing insanely and plunged past Drago who had dropped to one knee clattering away into a charge of suicidal Japs. Schultz's gun blasted from a big back side and Japs screamed hut came plunging on, masked with hlood and pumping shots from their rifles.

Ugwa Win lurched to his feet, the hroad *dah* out of its wooden scahhard and swinging neatly to lop off a Jap head from behind, and Drago fell back side and jungle with Ugwa Win coming fast hehind him until a Jap butted him down from the side with a rifle-smash. Another Jap came and both poised for a bayonet-thrust into the Kachin when Millcamp hurst through, pounding out .45's to drop the Japs. Schultz' shotgun roared amid the rifle blasts and Millcamp was hending to drag the rising, hleeding Ugwa Win away when a grenade lit a pink flash hetween them and let out its roar simultaneously with Millcamp's last tiny yelp of life.

The few remaining Japs did not carry their pursuit far. Schultz, Drago, and the little Kachin kept going fast, under vines and around tangled hamhoo thickets, for an hour hefore they sank down to rest and search for wounds where hlood covered them all. Drago had a nicked forearm, the wound hardly deeper than the skin; the rest was the blood of other men, as it was on the *dah* the Kachin wiped clean on his long green *lonji*....

In two days they reached the Jinghpaw village and, after a day's rest, a new guide took them farther north for a month of changing guides and friendly welcomes amid the various Kachin trihes. They encountered no English-speaking native until, after some hundred rugged miles of slow travel, they reached the great Irrawaddy River confluence. There the Kachins were hetter organized and awaiting hetter equipment than *dahs* and spears and muzzle-loaders in which they used stones for ammunition. They had even until recently had a British officer, hut this *Pearsing*, as they called their *Duwa*, had been killed in a skirmish. In command now was a native officer with the rank of *Jemadar*. His name was Nbaw Tu, and he could handle English fairly well.

There was heavy fighting across the Irrawaddy, he told the Americans. The best thing for them to do would be to wait, to hide their time until the British sent a new officer, who would hest know how to transport them over to India. Nbaw Tu was a gracious host. He took them around and introduced them personally to every villager, from the old headman down to the young children, the little girls with bamboo stakes set in their ear lohes to widen the holes for the six-inch earrings they would sport at maturity. The *Jemadar* took great pains in pointing out which girls were married and which were not, and it was clear that the casual moral customs stopped at marriage. The weeks rolled into each other for days of hunting game and nights now and again at this *Nta Dap* or that.

OCCASIONALLY a group of Kachin *Levies*, as the organized guerillas were called, came home with Japanese ears on a string to give testimony that an ambush had heen carried off. Schultz and Drago were not asked to join in the amhushes that were infrequently set on this tactically unimportant side of the Irrawaddy, but several times they joined hohhy trap expeditions. The trap-laying processes were simple—trip-wire to instant-fuse grenades set under a hamhoo husk or tied to tree trunks. Coolie parties made up of women and aged men occasionally came across the Irrawaddy with grenades, hut never brought the rifles and automatic weapons the Kachins craved.

Bamhoo signal-devices that sent out chimes for a mile warned of approaching Jap patrols in greater strength than an amhush could handle, and the Americans would be shunted upriver to another Kachin village where they made new friends, little men with small earrings in one ear, delicate young women and girls with countless thin cane hinders at the waist and knees, and open jackets above shirts or naked breasts, as they pleased.

The Kachins were Animists hy faith, in spite of a Christian veneer left over them hy missionaries of a more peaceful time. They had a God, or *nat*, for everything in life from a blade of grass to a house, from a toenail to life itself—good *nats* and bad *nats*, hut each of them to be met with pious supplications. *Nats* protected the rice paddies terraced on Jungle-cleared slopes, or failed to make them thrive, as they succeeded or failed at providing the hunter with game, the *levy* with longevity. There were activities and stretches of leisure to fill the days for Schultz and Drago, as well as their nights at the friendly and gratifying "meeting places of the young people."

Everywhere in the Kachin villages there had heen oil with which to clean the shotgun and submachine gun and the .45's. In February, when the gunfire sounded more and more frequently across the Irrawaddy, and when Dakota and C-46 transports came more often to drop supplies up north, Schultz hegan spending most of his time on the shotgun, polishing it down, wiping even the shells he still had in good supply. His girl, Gaw Tawn, began staying away from the paddy in which she worked in order to remain close hy him, her eyes sad. She realized before Drago did that Schultz was heading west.

He told Drago finally. "I'm restless," he said. "I ain't holding you to anything, but I'm going across the river."

"You think you owe it? Like you're goldbricking or something?"

"No, I'll tell you. I got to send a letter



"Then all in favor of polyandry say 'Aye!' "

at least. Don't you have any people back home?"

Drago was silent awhile, then said, "I got plenty." He ran a hand over his face. "I thought about it a lot back there in China. I never think about it here. Nuts, you know we're psycho?"

"I know it. I'm going over the river and send a letter."

"You got a family? Your own, I mean."

"I got a stepfather. That's all."

"I got parents and two brothers, nephews and nieces, cousins. A grandfather too. I'm going with you."

Gaw Tawn got herself selected as their guide, and another girl joined them for the trip, flattering Drago by the gesture because he had been her guest at the *Nla Daf* fire only a couple of times. Her name was Aun La and, like Gaw Tawn, she spoke in soft whispers.

They traveled slowly, resting often by day in the gold and green jungle enclosures, and rarely traveling at all by night. It was March when they reached a village where men in knickers and parachute sections that passed for uniforms were drilling. The men had American M-1 rifles and sang while marching to the commands of a *Jemadar*.

The British officer, Jack McCrane, M.C., was delighted to have two armed Americans join him. He was a big, rangy man, a fast talker and one of the first things he did was to take Schultz and Drago to his tent and give them an opium pipe to smoke. "Good for the nerves," he said. "Very light dose, mostly grass, and it won't make you impotent. Good. Go on."

Then he gave them writing paper and pencils at their request and waited for them to finish their letters. "Go off tonight to Fort Hertz and out to Assam within a week. Sure thing. Now if you—"

"When can we get out?" Schultz said.

The officer was stunned. "Out? We can use—we *need* men like you! You can take a platoon each, hit the Japs direct instead of—"

"Our luck's about ready to run out, sir." Schultz went on to tell all the officer had not bothered to ask, about the crash ten months ago and the constant skirmishes since then; the flights and climbs and the hunger, the death of Barker, Henderson, Wills, Millcamp. "We want two of us to bring back to India. That ain't asking much."

"Ten months, is it? Four casualties?" The officer dismissed it all impatiently. He packed a gummy pellet into his long pipe and lit it, drew deep draughts of the sweet'sh smoke. "I've been in this hole since '42 I can't begin to tell you of my casualties. Now the Nips have started a big one. In China they're mustering for a pincer drive from Hankow and Canton. They've bogged your own General Stillwell down right above us in the Hukawng Valley, and any day now they'll be driving for India. All around us they're in strength. And you want me to take you by the hand to Fort Hertz and evacuate you like some missionary. Well, just how do you expect me to do it?"

"Give us a map, that's all." Schultz took the officer's box of matches, an opium pellet, lit up and smoked. "We'll make it ourselves."

"And some ammo," Drago put in hurriedly. "If you could dig up some ammo for this gun."

The officer blinked, sprawled back on his cot, and laughed. "By yourselves up to Fort Hertz. Incredible. You're either damned fools or the bravest men I've ever met. Likely both."

"Those Kachin girls that came in with us," Schultz said, "I guess you can keep them here, huh? We'll appreciate it and send you a present from India. No sense getting them all bloody."

The officer kept laughing, and wagged his head. He saw that Drago got two fresh ammunition magazines to supplement the one he had left. He gave them each a pack of American cigarettes—by the grace of lend-lease, as he put it.

Then for days Schultz had to nag the officer, who finally said, "When Jack McCrane does an evacuation he does it big. Boys, I'm sending a whole blooming company up with you, that's what. Yes sir, 125 lovable killers, including a *Subedar*, three *Jemadars* and ten *Naikz*. Two Browning machine guns, rifles, grenades. How's that for hospitality, eh?"

"It's gonna cost us," Schultz grunted. "What favor can we do you?"

"Spoken like a true campaigner. Yes, indeed. All right. Now, including a Kachin lingo, or Jinghpaw, anyways. Good enough. Look here." He sat down on a tree stump at the clearing's edge, pushed his broad-brimmed Ghurka hat forward. "The Kachins are wonderful fighters. As guerillas. Hit and run. Fine. But sometimes they go haywire in a fire fight. They get carried away with lopping the heads and ears on a string. The presence of a British—well, say a *Duwa*—makes them soldierly. The company's going straight up to Sumprabum and on to Putao, or as far north as it can, anyway. Putao, that's the Fort Hertz area. If you're that anxious to get there, here's your chance. Just be shouts here and there if they go haywire, that's all I ask. The way is literally infested with Japs. I must tell you that."

"What's our alternative?" Drago said.

"You can go west with me and try to meet Stillwell. We must harass the Japanese flank in the Hukawng, a vast army of them. I would advise the northern trip."

He was grimly sincere. Drago said, "Schultz, whatever happened to this General Wingate we were supposed to meet down south someplace?"

McCrane rose to his feet, drew off his hat. "General Wingate was killed this month."

WITH the start of the northern excursion came news that Japanese forces had pounded into India, to Imphal at the Tamu Pass. Air war was heavy all along that western front on up to Stillwell's drive in Hukawng Valley. Schultz and Drago marched with the First Platoon of B Company N.K.L. and reached Sumprabum after only rear-guard action from the Japanese. On the way ambush stations were set up with sharpened blades of bamboo, called *Janjis*, set at 45-degree angles into the ground for the Japs to fall on when gunfire pinned them down. Trip wires led to whole baskets of short-fuse grenades on tree-trunks. Part of the Kachin strategy, it seemed, was to invite, or at least anticipate, Japanese encirclement operations.

Sumprabum with its fancy tin roofs was deserted. Bypassing it, the commanding *Subedar* explained to the Yanks that the Japs had a tactic of putting you on the defensive and then striking at a region they knew intricately. The outfit went north through the jungle paths for another week, setting its booby traps, planting ambush positions, when scouts reported a contact up ahead. Rifle fire sounded even as they spoke to the *Subedar*, who rapidly began delivering orders to his three *Jemadars*. The deployment began.

Politely, the little commander asked Schultz and Drago each to accompany a machine gun team. "Please see," he said slowly in Jinghpaw, "that the men fire only at Japanese. And that they do not leave their guns."

Emplacements were set upon knolls opposite one another on the flanks of a broad, grass-bedded path. Through this path and in a headlong advance one of the *Jemadars* led his platoon in their motley uniforms. The other two platoons went off, cutting trails to both sides. Night was gathering fast. Soon after the first steady firing, the advance platoon began falling back. They retreated between the machine gun knolls and presently the shrieking Japs began to charge.

SCHULTZ came over to Drago's position where the gunner and ammo man and bearer were all lying flat in position and where Drago was lying on his back. "This is a circus," Schultz said. "If those Japs come running into this we stand a good chance of getting through."

Drago sat up. "What are we supposed to do?"

"Just holler at them if they leave the gun." Below, Kachins were still hurrying to the rear. The Jap cries were growing louder. Abruptly, without a warning hiss, mortar shells slammed out a pattern across the path and up the knoll where Schultz's machine gun sat. Men sprawled below, and ran off leaving several sprawled grotesque positions. The machine gun on the other knoll opened first for a short burst, as if in anger and for no other purpose.

Schultz barked, "Don't let these guys do that," and raced down into another peppering wallop of mortar shells that lit his hasty foxhole orange bright.

The jungle was alive with shrieking birds and animals, and the Japs came forth in their boisterous charge, with too much momentum for the front ranks to balt at the machine gun crossfire. It laced death through the gathering dark from two sides and Schultz bellowed in order to elevate the fire; Drago echoed it to get fire back amid the Japs.

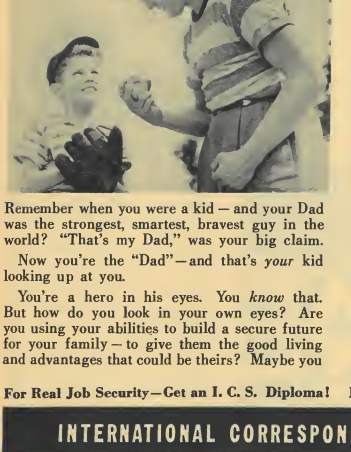
Suddenly both machine gun parties leaped down the knoll, six Kachins in a race for the dead Japanese, knives in hand for the gathering of ears. Simultaneously Schultz and Drago began roaring: "*Sa mu! Sa mu!*" and the gunners obeyed, stopping short in their tracks, whirling back where both Americans were already hammering slugs back into darkness where screams confirmed the presence of Japs.

But it only lasted short moments, and when the Kachins were back on the guns the living Japs were gone, leaving only the distant animal shrieks beyond the close perimeter of silence.

Then gunfire began crackling on the right flank where the Third Platoon must have

(*Continued on page* 48)

A BOY NEEDS A DAD HE CAN BRAG ABOUT!



Remember when you were a kid — and your Dad was the strongest, smartest, bravest guy in the world? "That's my Dad," was your big claim.

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(*Continued from page* 46)

circled. Schultz ordered the machine guns hauled up and advanced them directly down the hroad path, when a man came plunging out of the forest and, colliding, brought Drago down. It was the Subedar himself, wild-eyed, hellowing, *"Kanang kaw n-na du sai?"*

"Where the hell did you come from?" he wanted to know, and before anyone could answer, men were racing across the path toward the left flank—Kachin Levies with rifles at port going fast but in orderly procession to join the Second Platoon, as no douht the First had already done. Schultz grabhed Drago and held him there as the Suhedar drove the machine gun crews west among the others.

"Listen," Schultz said, racing back to where the bodies of Japs littered the path and flanking jungle. "I get the whole picture now, and we're kissing them good-bye." He scouted around until he found a submachine gun. Drago had already picked up two loaded magazines and now Schultz packed three more into his haversack. "They're trying to draw the Japs west as far down into the Hukawng as they can. Stilwell must have broke through and he'll eat them up before they can go south for the India drive. It's real fruitcake stuff, a circus, and I ain't buying any of it."

He was running north along the path again. Even the wildlife had gone silent, so that their rapid footfalls were the only sounds. "Go, boy," he rasped. "The Japs'll be going after them through here soon enough. How do you like that McCrane? Never meant to hit Fort Hertz at all. Huh! Imagine trying to get a whole Jap army sucked in! All they need is a company after that Kachin crew."

He went on raving that way in undertone as they plunged north along the path, until Drago blocked his way, shook him quiet and, shoving him into the jungle, said, "Where's your shotgun?"

"I got sick of it."

They both began to laugh, and sank down to eat some cold rice.

FOUR days later they reached a Jinghpaw village where the natives met them with alarmed faces and promptly hid them in the jungle a short distance away. "No levies here," one man informed them, and soon the old headman himself appeared in a long striped *longji*.

The Japs were angry, he explained, and had warned that they would wipe out the entire village at the very next act of levy attrition. "Our men were forced to quit the army," he said with a sorrowful sigh, "and when they attack a patrol, they must bury the bodies deep. No ears can be taken," he lamented, spreading his hands in despair. "The slightest evidence must be wiped away."

He had much to tell them. That the Chaukan Pass some forty miles north was heavily guarded, and that the only way out of Burma for them lay still another hundred miles north at the Diphu Pass into Tibet. The mountains were too high elsewhere, he pointed out. They must begin gathering warm clothes.

"Wait a minute," Schultz said. "We're going to Fort Hertz."

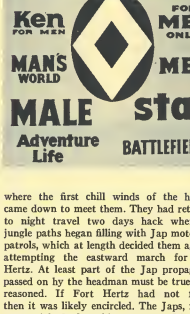
"Ah, no. That lies on an open plain. You will be killed like cattle. And it will not exist for white men very long. The Japanese are sweeping over everything in the north. They have conquered India and will soon encircle the American and Chinese armies in the Hukawng. Did you not know?"

"Who told you that?" Schultz asked. "The Japs?"

"Yes. A captain told us. He lies buried under my house."

To that house the headman took them at nightfall, a long house of six glowing *daps* where, behind the young people's screen they drank the distilled rice beer called *lauku*, far more potent than the *tsaku* beer itself, and where young women did them the service of shaving away their beards. They ate hean curds and honeyed pork on rice, and whiled some hours away in the soft pleasantries of Kachin hospitality. The girls woke them at the hreak of dawn, stumbled with them past the sleeping household, and saw them to the jungle in farewell.

Schultz's haversack had been stuffed with rice in a sack and dried pork and two woolen sweaters that they put on four days later in sight of the mountain gap called Chaukan,



where the first chill winds of the heights came down to meet them. They had returned to night travel two days hack when the jungle paths began filling with Jap motorized patrols, which at length decided them against attempting the eastward march for Fort Hertz. At least part of the Jap propaganda passed on hy the headman must be true, they reasoned. If Fort Hertz had not fallen, then it was likely encircled. The Japs, moreover, might he launching a second drive into India through that very Chaukan Pass. A run west across Tibet would take them to New Delhi far into India, too far for any Jap drive to reach.

"But we'll freeze in those mountains," Drago protested.

"Yeah, we got to pick up some warm clothes somehow."

"So we'll starve. Who can live in Tibet?"

"There's people there. Nice people, too, I remember hearing."

It was a wistful remark that failed to stand up three months later when two men, hearded once again and wearing quilted clothes sewn for them by Kachins—from the uniforms of Japs they had ambushed and killed—plodded through the broad, forested Diphu Pass into Tibet.

Herds of kiang ran the ascending steppes—wild asses too fleet to be isolated and captured for portage. Snow drifts thickened in the slow ascent and vanished again in valleys, where wild sheep roamed aimlessly and wild onion grew, promising available food. The first Tibetans the wanderers met were nomads flocking sheep south for trade. In their sheepskin coats and hats they regarded Schultz and Drago with unconcealed curiosity, and then with alarm at the sight of their weapons. But they returned smiles for smiles and soon invited the pair into a tent, where a furclad woman served them hot tea with rancid hutter and platters of a roasted barley meal she called *tsambo*. Furry yak skins were spread out for them to sleep on and, to the Americans' astonishment, both husband and wife stepped out of their sheepskins and lay naked together by the Floorpan fire. Not even the Kachins had been so innocently simple.

THEY moved northwest under the misconception that all Tibetans would be that hospitable. They learned differently at the first town they reached, a dun of loam huts built around a monastery of the same material but considerably larger. People came to shout at them and stayed back only because they raised their sub-machine guns menacingly. Then an official came scurrying forth to jabber bitterly at them and used every gesture he had that he could think of to impart the fact they were not welcome in Tibet. Not without a travel permit, he conveyed by producing a sheet of paper, pointing at it and then at them, and making his fingers walk up and down imaginary mountains.

It happened over and over in each town going west, and soon it was clear that only among the nomads would they find friends. From such a family they bought a great quantity of things for the price of a single .45 automatic and their last four cartridges. For that small price they got long sheepskin coats, broad Tibetan hats with earlaps, sheepskin overshoes, and a live yak of their own for milk and portage.

"Now that our guns are covered," Schultz said, "maybe they won't be so damned hostile in the villages."

If anything, the villagers were more hostile, and it took a display of the submachine weapons to keep them from violence. Schultz pointed his with open malice in the first town they reached that had a sight to see, a terraced monastery with pointed gold roof pinnacles glinting in the sun. He had merely wanted to visit it, but when the squalling men and hoys began to bend for stones that whipped open the sheepskin coat, raised the gun, and demanded food. He still had Indian rupees and showed the crumpled wad of them, pointed to his mouth, patted his helly. Everybody turned away. The inevitable official came, identified himself as a lama, or monk, and pointed south, waved them that way, and shook his fist up and down in a demand for speed. The man fled when Schultz stuhbornly touched the gun muzzle to his forehead, and presently a more important figure appeared.

"You cannot purchase food," he stated

(*Continued on page* 50)

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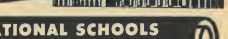
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(*Continued from page* 48)

flatly, shocking the wanderers with the first English they had heard after six weeks in the country. "No man is allowed to sell you provisions. You will starve or leave Tibet."

"Or shoot it up!" Schultz barked.

We have an army. Soldiers will pursue you and destroy you. You must neither hunt game. It is forbidden. Our laws are Buddhist."

"Who are you, mister? Take us to the Dalai Lama!"

The man, fat and self-satisfied, laughed. "That is hardly possible. I am governor of this province."

"Then a governor in Tibet is mighty small fry!" Schultz roared, and led the yak out of the village, with Drago laughing behind him.

THE next day Schultz pumped three shots at a wild sheep and butchered it before the eyes of valley nomads. He waved with the bloody Japanese sword for them to come and take meat, but they all turned away, men, women and children, and hid inside their tents. These people were without flocks and their women had been drifting over the slopes, earlier, picking wild onion, but none would come take the meat. Drago built a fire and they sat roasting mutton into the descent of darkness, when a man sidled over to sit by them.

"We got to get out of here," Schultz said. "This place'll be the death of us, I feel it in my bones. I'll take my chances with Japs running all over India rather than to try making it across Tibet. My bones ache. I want to get indoors."

The man watched them eat. Schultz stripped some meat off and offered it. The man hesitated then accepted the meat, walked off with it. He was soon back, smiling, nodding, looking furtively about in the darkness, then tugging gently at Schultz's arm. Drago said, "He's inviting us into his tent. Bring a leg along for him. See what he says."

As soon as Schultz held out the mutton, the nomad snatched it and tucked it inside his coat with a nervous smile. They finished eating inside his warm tent; other men drifted in, singly and in pairs, to squat and stare. There was a cloudy barley beer to drink, and *tsamba* to go with the meat. The barley meal was evidently the staple in Tibet.

When the Americans were through eating, one of the visitors caught their attention and began to talk, meanwhile gesticulating energetically with his hands. "He wants us to travel with him," Drago said, putting the few words he understood together with the hand signs. "He's going west with sheepskins to trade. He's inviting us to join him."

With signs and grunts an agreement was made for an early morning start, and the man, young and unbearded, departed full of smiles. One by one the others departed, leaving the Yanks alone with the host, his weary old wife, and two teen-age sons. As the family prepared its sleeping rugs, Schultz said, "I don't know. I don't trust these people. You go on and sleep. I'll sit up awhile, then wake you."

"Ah, this family's okay. Nothing wrong with these nomads."

"Something's in the air. You go on to sleep."

With a smile and good-night grunt, the scraggly-bearded Tibetan smothered the butter-lamp, and in the dimness the family undressed. The wife bathed herself from a mud cask, muttering sing-song prayers. Schultz muttered, too, almost without letup. "I feel it," he said just before Drago dozed off, "they'd skin us alive if we gave them half a chance."

No man could have looked less menacing than the young nomad when he called them early for the trip west. Beaming with smiles, he led them a good distance up the valley to his tent, where four yaks huddled against the chill winds, laden not with sheepskins as Drago had guessed, but merely with heaps of shorn wool. The Tibetans did absolutely no slaughtering and got their skins—or rare meals of meat—only when wolves or bears did the slaughtering for them. The nomad introduced himself as Urkhang and his pretty wife as Tsngla. She was wrapped heavily in skins, a thick bundle of merriment, for she laughed most of the time, fat cheeks pushing her eyes into long, tight slits. With hand signs she asked permission to load some of her household goods, including the collapsed yakskin tent, onto the Americans' yak, and it was Drago who granted the request, Schultz muttering sullenly to himself.

He grew even more bitter as the party took a trail that ascended in icy blasts that they endured all morning. The dry air discouraged talk but he kept grumbling, and Drago kept cautioning him to get a grip on himself. They ate turnips and *tsamba* at the midday camp, and Schultz refused to thank Tsngla for the hot bowl—allowing herself free movement in the cleaning of pots, but more than that, Urkhang urged Schultz toward her as she smothered the lamp for the night.

"Go on," Drago whispered. "I guess they're like Eskimos in a lot of ways."

In the biting days of climbs and descents, the laughing woman was wife to the three of them. With Schultz conciliated, harmony blossomed over the traveling and filled the night-time tent—until a visitor came. Dogs barked to herald his arrival and Urkhang went out to greet the newcomer. He fell back into the tent pale and thoroughly shaken. "Khampa!" he said, and Tsngla leaped up from her yakskin.

The dogs quit yapping. In a moment the man pushed into the tent and drew himself up with an arrogant smile. He was thick with several layers of quilted sheepskin—evidently less for protection against the cold than against a sudden knife-thrust. He looked around as if counting the inhabitants, then backed outside. The dogs set up their squall, which receded, but not to a very great distance.

"Khampa!" Urkhang gasped, and scrambled over to the Americans, talking rapidly, gesticulating with his hands.

Drago proceeded to translate, and it was a description of Tibetan robbers who traveled in armed groups, made their headquarters in three or four tents wherever they spied the tents of one nomad or more. They were brutal, according to Urkhang and, from the look of naked horror on the normally happy face of Tsngla, his story had to be credited. It was fully corroborated not very much later, when the first Khampa returned with three more. Schultz and Drago were already dressed in their sheepskin coats, their submachine guns in hand under cover. They had tried to convey to Urkhang that he should go up with one band of the robbers when they returned, but he was too agitated to make sense of their hand signs.

The Khampas took comfortable positions around the tent and began calling for things —food, drink, and at length the woman Tsngla. Schultz got up and with one hand took a man by the collar and pitched him tumbling toward the exit. He kicked a second man over while Urkhang ran back whining in terror. Drago punched a third robber full in the face where he sat, and the four of them scrambled outside in their ridiculous layers of sheepskin.

"He's afraid," Drago said, nodding at Urkhang, who was frantically making hand signs. "Says they got rifles. They're killers."

"Yeah. Come on."

Schultz was outside in icy winds with Drago trotting along after the running Khampas. They went in a steady loping stride over the ground toward the clump of Khampa tents and Schultz was drawing the submachine gun out. "Shotgun Schultz," Drago said, his voice trembling. "You look funny with a tommy gun."

"Yeah. We're getting out of Tibet." With that he began firing into a tent, short bursts that indicated he was not wild and meant the bullets to count.

DRAGO cried, "Schultz!" just once, then ran off to one side in time to hammer slugs at two running fat figures. A gang of staked black dogs set up a snarling pandemonium and rifle fire pounded. Schultz clattered men dead as they poured out of the tents, and Drago had no choice but to do the same as slugs cracked the air around his ears. He hit the snowbanks often but Schultz advanced steadily, loosing his deadly bursts even as men screamed and even, the next moment, when women ran wild-eyed into the moonlight, children at their skirts, killed. He riddled every running figure and spared only the dogs, the laden yaks, as though he recognized innocence only in animals. Drago screamed for him to spare the kids, but Schultz killed.

Then flames burst from a tent, one of the butter-lamps set a blaze and at last Schultz hit the ground. Drago, behind a snowbank, saw him fall and took him for dead. But then Schultz was crawling toward him, then rolling over to clip a new magazine in place and commence firing again in his measured short burst. The whole sky seemed to be lit up. A second tent was ablaze and Schultz kept blasting every runner in the firelight.

"Schultz, it's murder, murder! Little kids!"

"Yeah, it's a pity on them. Butchers—you saw them. Only butchers could scare people like that. I believe Urkhang to the letter." He pounded out shots. "Everything's religion in Tibet. That's a tribe, those Khampas, born and bred. A kid's just on his way to being a man." He fired again and then sat down against the snowbank and looked at Drago. "I'm a kid myself. I'm 23."

(*Continued on page* 52)

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(*Continued from page 50*)

He would not wait. The two tents were still blazing. The Khampa survivors had fled and Urkhang was gathering loot, as Tsngla explained to Drago that it all belonged to them, that spoils belonged to whomever conquered Khampas. It was the law. But Schultz was on his way, muttering, packing the yak, heading south for India. The date was May 6, 1944.

URKHANG packed their yak where Schultz left off and, because he did, they had pots to cook in, vats of rancid butter to cook with and for fuel in two lamps and, above all, they had flint quick-matches to give them fire. But on the upper slopes the land was barren of plantlife and they ate cold meat, raw turnips and onions. They camped in a Khampa tent that Urkhang had loaded on their yak, but after two weeks in the wilderness the yak died mysteriously and they had to shoulder their gear. They were already drifting, aimless and light-headed, down into a frost-hound valley when they met a caravan of pilgrims headed west for Lhassa, and were able to barter Khampa skins and provisions, treasures like mirrors, human-bone rosaries, for a pair of little donkeys.

Schultz raved in his sleep. "I ain't eating dog no more," he wailed in penitent tones one night. "I'm just a little kid," he cried out one dawn. As they traveled he muttered constantly, and it got worse over the weeks that took them, it seemed, nowhere.

"We ought to find somebody pretty soon," Drago said, rubbing frost off his beard. "There's got to be some farms below, some towns."

"You'll get nothing hut Japs," Schultz raved. "Japs is all you got coming, so stop griping. You're in the army. You forgot that, didn't you? You're a lousy punk, Denny."

"You're Denny, not me. My name's Jack McCrane."

"Your name's Willie Drago. *My* name's Denny. Denny Schultz."

The talk went that way down into greener ranges, with Drago trying without success to get Schultz laughing. It went on that way through sudden valleys overrun with sheep and herds of yak, grinning farmers, Dhotials, Bhotia wanderers with women bejeweled at the nose. And it went on into the rains of the monsoon sweeping once again from the southwest.

They had shed their sheepskin coats and got rid of them in barters for beef and eggs along the Sadiya Frontier Tract. Then they were shedding the quilted jackets in jungle growth that fed their donkeys and gave them herries and crystal water to drink and bathe in. Smiling little Assamese assured them there were no Japs in India, the drive at Imphal having collapsed completely in June, and it began to look like they had come home to safety at last, where half-naked natives knew names like Stillwell and Wavell and even spoke of General Merrill's Marauders.

But Schultz raved in his sleep and in the first moments of waking. Each morning in the blazing sun or sudden rain, he spoke of the giant pandas he had slaughtered for no good reason; and Drago would bring him awake assuring him that he had harmed none of the black-eyed pandas they had spied, that he had slaugbtered only Khampa bandits and enemy Japs and always for a reason.

He kept telling Schultz that Stillwell had pierced the Kachin hills all the way to Myitkyina and held its airfield—even the Assamese knew it—that the war was bound to end soon and that they could move safely south. Schultz only grunted and went on muttering to himself, polishing his gun with its one remaining magazine.

Then there were troops. Across a yellow plain from the jungle edge Drago saw them around their jeeps. It was a new road pointing into north Burma and he ran for it, yelling. On August 21, 1944 the wanderers were home and Drago was running, screaming, "Hey! Hey! It's us! Yankee Doodle! Look! Look!" Schultz came charging along, and then—it was beyond Drago's comprehension—Schultz was firing the submachine gun, charging along with his gun clattering, not in measured bursts, but in one constant stuttering song of death.

Drago dropped flat on the grass yelling, "No! No!" He bellowed, "No-o-o!" not to Schultz, but to the troops who then fired a volley. And then it was quiet, no submachine or rifle fire. One volley and the 15-month nigbtmare was over for Staff-sergeant Denny Schultz, U.S.A.A.F.

Slow footfalls approached Drago where he lay in an old Kachin sweater. Rifle muzzles pointed down at him in a circle. Beyond, the faces were Oriental—Chinese, for they were U.S. uniformed—men forced by a madman to kill him. Drago rose with his hands high. A soldier lifted his gun away. Several yards ahead in the grass, Schultz lay in a contorted position, as though even in death there was no repose for him.

An officer approached in shiny boots. In perfect English he said, "Identify yourself."

Officers of the Chinese 38th Division, on guard over tbe new Ledo Road that reopened the supply route across Burma, heard the story of Shotgun Schultz and his vagabonds, their incredible journey over some 2500 miles of hellish jungle and mountain, the soil of five nations. As for Schultz, Drago testified, it could have been that a memory of hostile gunfire from Kuomintang troops caused the outburst in his last moment of life; it could have been that his feverish brain confused the Chinese soldiers with Japs, or Khampa bandits.

A 'COPTER flew Drago to Chandpur, and from there a C-46 ferried him to Calcutta and a 10th Air Force base hospital. He was in perfect physical shape but for a bone condition of the feet. The condition responded to treatment and bed rest, the records indicated. The records also dwelt on the fact that, throughout his three-month stay, Drago slept only fitfully, but they made no attempt to say why. He was flown to Kandy, in Ceylon, on November 14, and then flown to the Zone of the Interior (or home), with very few belongings hut with all that his mind could contain, in time for Christmas and the disastrous news of a German counterattack in Belgium. He languished at Thomas M. England General Hospital in Atlantic City while the German "Bulge" thrust fell apart, and on February 20, 1945 Corporal William Drago was released from the Army with a Medical Discharge, a silent, brooding man.



"One other request, Mathilde—will you help me up?"



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Allotment Annies

Continued from page 35

didn't love—this she assured the government men. "Well, at least a little. A couple of them, well, they were so nice, I just couldn't turn them down. They were going away soon to fight. Boys like that, I just couldn't refuse them."

"And you couldn't refuse their allotment checks either."

"Well, that helped too," she admitted honestly. With an oblique glance at her inquisitors, she crossed her long legs suggestively, saying, "It isn't always that with me. Not only soldiers and sailors. I like to go out with other men, too. When they're sweet to me."

IN a like manner she flirted her way through a Federal Grand Jury indictment and the examination of a court psychiatrist, who came out of his office to summon a policewoman as company, and later declared Alma "an exceedingly impulsive individual, who appears to be more readily actuated by emotion than by judgment." Alma flirted with reporters who came to interview her where she awaited trial in a Detroit prison cell, and even flirted with the guards.

Her behavior was a preview of the wacky race she was to run the government clear across the country, but officials were too solemn about it all to detect the hint, too intensely focused on the callous nature inherent in every "Allotment Annie."

Young men uprooted from their homes, threatened by the terror of war, uncertain about the future and, above all, painfully lonely, were easy prey for these women. As night-spot hostesses, waitresses, bar-girls, they plied a unique profession that compiled a take in the high millions and contributed to the misery of men far from home, men training to put their lives on the line for Uncle Sam.

So Alma was no figure of amusement to Assistant U.S. Attorney Bernard Margolius and Special U.S. Investigator Martin J. Meenehan when they prepared the evidence against her. Nor was Detroit Federal Court Judge Frank Picard titillated by Alma's demure yet clearly provocative glances when he fixed her bail at $4,000. News photographers popped their bulbs by the score as Alma, swinging a long leg, confessed to reporters that her high standard of living had left her without means enough to get her bail unwritten by a bondsman.

To the redhead's rescue, or to a futile attempt at it, came none other than Marine Private Hank Raskovitch, whose name she bore as her most recent husband. He told reporters he was there to go her bail, but the sad reality was that he had no more money than Alma had. "But I'm standing by her," he said valiantly for the record. "Maybe she did wrong, but she's the best woman I ever met."

During visiting hour at Detroit's County Jail, Alma finally gave way to tears, professing her true love for the Marine. Three days later she repeated the scene with Navy Apprentice Seaman Peter Zabo, a husband of such ancient vintage that he was already home on furlough from Pacific Coast duty. He stood by Alma just like the Marine, but was just as broke. Alma wept her true love, and nobody doubted her devotion to both spouses.

Back in her cell the redhead received a letter that showed that her effect on men transcended the limits of wedlock. "To the Marrying Gal," wrote an admirer, "County Jail, Detroit." No other identification was necessary to bring the letter where it belonged. "Dear Alma," it said, "In case you ever become free again, I would like to become husband number 16 or 17, or whatever it is, for you are just my type of girl. If you ever left me for another man I wouldn't be disappointed like most. I would understand you."

Alma's obliging nature had not deserted her in jail. She showed the letter to newsmen and laughed with them over it, just as she frequently laughed in telling of different methods she had employed to snag her respective mates. Most of them were acquired by the same use of natural talents that had netted her Hank Raskovitch the Faithful, but here and there a recalcitrant swain crossed her path.

"That was a test of challenge," she testified. "Like Joe McNabb—I had to tell him I was in a family way. He was swell about it. And tbis boy Furstmann, a real gentle blond kid, funny first name I can never remember even right after I read it. I took sleeping pills when he was about to sbip out. So we got married right away."

Husband Landersen was a victim of bis own greed. Too handsome and conceited to care about any woman very much, he would not fall for the suicide or pregnancy pitches. She sensed that, Alma told her newsmen friends. So, strolling alongside Lake St. Clair with him one Autumn evening, she pointed out beyond the commercial shipping lane channeled into busy Detroit River.

"See that yacht?" she murmured casually. "That's ours, Albert. Yours and mine."

"Huh? What are you talking about?"

Alma squeezed his arm. "Didn't I tell you that the yacht comes with the $25,000?"

"The $25,000? What $25,000? What's got into you, baby?"

"Oh, I thougbt I told you, Albert. The first of the year, I get my inheritance. I was scared I wouldn't get it, because my uncle's will says I have to be married by Christmas. But now that I've found my man I'm not scared any more. I sure thought I told you already."

"Hey, wait a minute! Married?" He stopped her in the mild, breezy evening, then glanced out toward the anchored yacht. He licked bis lips. "Alma, I may not be around by Christmas. I might ship out any week now. You know, Alma, we better hurry up!"

The gleeful reporters sent in their stories to the amusement of Michigan readers. But the government officials still were not laugbing. They were too close to records of heartbreak and even tragedy resulting from Alma's profession. Billie Smith married five men before she reached 18, with a strict preference for sailors that failed to amuse the U.S. Attorney General's office, which also learned that the girl's motber almost succeeded in a suicide attempt. The legal staff was not entertained by Sandra Tobis, who confined her marriages to Air Corps pilots, playing the odds of their survival and winning to the tune of $42,000 in insurance and allotment checks, until the F.B.I. called on her when Dependency Benefits records showed too many Air Corps wives with the same physical description.

One particular case was enough to get the book thrown at every "Allotment Annie" in custody. It happened in an African replacement depot when two men moving up to join a line outfit began chatting about their respective families, as bomesick soldiers often do. They began to trade photographs—wife, mother, sisters. Suddenly one of the pair leaped to bis feet holding the other's wallet in quivering hands.

"Which is your wife and which is your sister?" he yelled

"Take it easy with those pictures! What's got into you?"

BOTH were standing over the steel helmets that had served them as seats. "Listen! Either I'm married to your sister or you're a lousy wise guy and I'm gonna bust your jaw! Whicb is your wife?"

"This, you lunatic! What do you mean—married to my sister?"

"Where'd you get my wife's picture? What kind of stunt—"

A fist crashed in his teeth and he lasbed back. They raged at each other, and men came running to break them apart, to listen as, panting, each held forth a print made from the same negative and swore it was a photo of his wife, each raved, fumbling pictures back into his wallet. Abruptly one man leaped for his rifle, brandished it while men scattered in horror. The afternoon shattered apart in hollow gunfire. Three shots and one victim of an "Allotment Annie" was dead at the hands of another, whom a court-martial later sentenced to life imprisonment.

It was an incredible coincidence for two hushands of the same practitioner to meet

(*Continued on page 56*)

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(*Continued from page 54*)

head-on that way, but it happened, and it went into the records as a kind of symbol for the quiet suffering endured by all victims of the vicious wartime racket. So the government tended toward no mercy in handling the "Allotment Annies" it put on trial. The Arizona Federal Court sent Mamie Ellison and her seven tatooed hearts up for 18 months. Billie Smith, who was only 17 when tried in Virginia for marrying five sailors, was put away in a reformatory for a year. Sandra Tohis, the Air Corps wife and highest cash scorer, received a two-year sentence. It looked bleak for Alma Raskovitch when her trial began.

BUT Alma appeared unshaken by the threat of imprisonment. She was her radiant self at all times, with a smile for every eye that met hers, and flirtatious winks for the court stenographer, the prosecuting attorney, and the judge himself. Her court-appointed attorney made the most of her amiable personality and mind-mindedness. He cited the chronic irresponsibility of a woman who could save nothing out of her $600 a month, who openly flirted with the court authorities. He presented, through her own testimony on the witness stand, the disorganization of a woman who could rest easy with a deep and avowed fondness for 15 men in addition to her husbands.

And he brought in witnesses, neighbors from the elegant apartment house where Alma brought her servicemen for the short weeks or months before they shipped out. These people verified Alma's unwavering domestic sincerity as more than a mere courtroom phrase. A parade of happy soldiers and respectful sailors, Marines who guided Alma through doors with gentle hands at her elbow. The witnesses indicated no approval of Alma's involvements, and made it plain they had come simply to reveal the facts.

Alma's attorney presented these witnesses, he assured the court, to show his client not as a formidable manipulator of men but as a moral and social incompetent in need of medical attention rather than punishment. He succeeded in raising laughter among the spectators. He brought forth further manifestations of sympathy from the newsmen. But the prosecutor remained coldly determined, and impressed the jury to find Alma guilty on several counts ranging from higamy to embezzlement. There was nothing for the enterprising redhead to do but take action in her own behalf. As the court prepared to sentence her, she fell ill.

She did it dramatically, swaying right in front of the judge's bench. Reporters dashed forward, crawling all over each other to get to her. Photographers popped their bulbs. In the pandemonium the judge pounded out his demand for order, while court police carried Alma away in a dead faint. Removed to the city hospital, she was found to be feverish. It may well have been a temperature normal to the fiery redhead, for that evening she calmly walked out of the place, in her hospital pajamas, to vanish completely from Detroit.

To every point in the nation wirephotos carried the image of the Number One "Allotment Annie." Detroit in its war boom was a maze of scurrying humanity from which Alma could easily escape, and there was no question that she would run as far from town as she could.

As the hunt for Alma went on, new twists in the allotment racket were taking shape. Now servicemen themselves were being arrested as the culprits. In Columbia, South Carolina, a soldier had his new mistress receive his legal wife's checks and enjoyed two of them before the F.B.I. closed in. Nine sailors of Norfolk, Virginia, were picked up with 35-year-old Jane Millican, a handsome if fleshy souse who would have been second high-scorer in place of the tattooed Mamie Ellison, if not for the fact that she was only a tool of the scheming sailors.

Permanently stationed at that naval base, the nine gobs took good-time Jane to as many Justices of the Peace around the suburbs, with promises to keep her in whisky for the duration, promises they made every effort to keep while using the allotment funds to support a running orgy.

Jane lived in a huge, inherited ante-bellum house that served perfectly as the address of them all. Each sailor acted the gentleman for the night in which he could find no younger playmate to bring home. She was an innocent among the earnest "Allotment Annies" and protested that innocence with a zeal that got her off with a nominal sentence. Only a consummate actress could have faked the indignation she manifested whenever accused of having committed a crime. She considered herself a patriot of the first water. "Who else would take all them boys in?" she demanded. "Why do you think I made them all to home?"

Naturally, the professional pimp had to show up in the allotment racket. John Ricci was the name. A sergeant major in the Quartermaster Corps serving lower New England, he sent four girls up from New London to Boston and brought them young servicemen to seduce. Their successes produced an average of half a dozen bushands each, to the tune of $1200 a month gross with a tidy sum left for Ricci after paying off the girls. Ricci was in Salem, in the process of establishing a fifth G.I. "wife," when his career came to an end with a greeting from the F.B.I.

THE Federal men were relentless in their search for Alma Raskovitch, but she eluded them for five long months. Her arrest finally came off late in December, 1944, on a beach in southern California.

She was not alone when a pair of Federal men squatted down on each side of her. A young man in swim trunks was using her thigh as a pillow, lying there on the sun-drenched sand. Alma was wearing a white forerunner of the Bikini that seemed about to let her spill all over the beach like golden honey. Glancing at the identfication held before her in a flipped-open wallet, she flashed one of her bright smiles. "Oh, must I go with you today?"

"What's going on?" her young man wanted to know, rising up on an elbow. "Who are these guys, Annie?"

"Annie!" one Federal man harked. "You call yourself Annie?"

The other FBI man could not repress a laugh. "Allotment Annie herself! Why shouldn't she call herself that?" He showed his identfication to the young man, who

(*Continued on page 58*)

LOOK AT THESE PICTURES



Sign-writer Dan Nagle, 8609 34th Ave. S. W., Seattle, Washington says "Just to have stopped losing hair and to have gained even a little more is wonderful. My hair filled in, too, where it had been thin."



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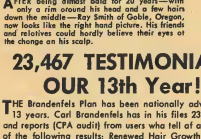


This young man was steadily losing his hair until he began using Brandenfels Home Plan, at his wife's urging. His "after" picture was taken two years later. New hope for baldness? This man will emphatically answer YES!

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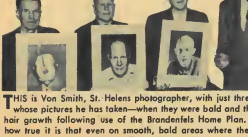
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(*Continued from page 56*)

came up sitting in a burry, with a dumbfounded gaze at Alma.

"Come on, Alma," a Federal man said, "right now."

"Oh, can't it wait till Monday? Just two days?" She leaned over on the perplexed young man, smiling at him. "Frankie and I are getting married tomorrow.'

The arresting officers knelt beside the couple mutely, and then one of them reached out for the dog-tags banging around the fellow's neck, read a couple of words, and muttered, "Navy. She's . . . she wants some time to marry this sailor!"

THEY were in for another shock. While waiting for the extradition papers to go through, the F.B.I. men, questioning Alma in her cell at the San Diego jail, learned that she was being supported by the allotment checks of two soldiers she had married in her five months on the loose. "I didn't start getting those checks till last month," she lamented. "Not both of them, anyway. It's been rough."

Then there was the eastbound train for Detroit, and more to confound the F.B.I. men taking her in. Sailors, soldiers, Marines—men from every branch and sub-branch of the services—heading home or away from home at the start or finish of furloughs, took one look at Alma and couldn't stay away. In that typical wartime mob she was as cooperative as ever, staying put between her two captors while eyeing all the possibilities who crowded by with helplessly hungry glances at all that her tight green sweater displayed.

But now and again the lady needed to be excused. One of the gentlemen with her did the escorting, made her a road through the packed G.Is, and stood outside the little room she visited. But two nights were to pass before the train reached Detroit, and there was the problem of keeping Alma inside the compartment Uncle Sam generously provided her. The Federal men could only bank on her agreeable disposition, and went to their own compartment once they heard her door click locked. It turned out to be a mistake: Alma was missing in the morning.

Searching that crowded train was all but impossible even with the help of every conductor and porter on board. Not only the ladies' rooms but the men's rooms as well were investigated in every car as the train roared east. Finally, the compartments came under scrutiny, and the perspiring Federal men found their redhead with a youthful Air Corps captain. The next night held little sleep for the government men. They took turns sitting right outside Alma's compartment watching her door.

Not even the Federal Court in Detroit could put a damper on the irrepressible Alma. She whispered in the ears of reporters, who had to be pulled away from her lips by colleagues. She kept her seductive smile fixed on the judge as he prepared to sentence her.

The judge referred her to the probation authorities for them to determine whether any circumstances in the case would tend to modify the severity of sentence. Her luck seemed to be looking up. She was the darling of the reporters, whose newspaper items unfailingly showed her in the best possible light. And just while the probation people were considering her case, the broad-view attitude began to gain standing with the publicized remark of Justice Matthew F. McGuire, sitting in just such a case in the District of Columbia Federal Court: "They must be conceded to he," the jurist said, "products of broken homes, irreligion,



"Stop looking for crab grass!"

and of a too zealous pursuit of the cult of pleasure."

Indeed, the prohation authorities found that remark descriptive of Alma Raskovitch, but apparently their sympathies were watered down by less abstract facts in the case, including her behavior on the train from San Diego. Her sentence was severe: two years and a fine of $2,000. Presumably, failure to pay the fine would have added time to her imprisonment, but Alma went off to confinement with a clean financial hill. Who paid the $2,000? Why, Hank Raskovitch the Marine, Pete Zahho the sailor, and a host of admiring reporters and news photographers.

To take up the collection, Raskovitch managed a furlough from Parris Island, where he had by then been installed as an instructor non-com. Zahho wired all he could raise from Hawaii. The hig Marine got the addresses of other hushands from his adoring Alma, hut only the worst vitriol came from them in answer to his plea. For all that, he raised the money within ten days and returned to Parris Island contented in a way that will he his secret forever.

The story of Alma did not end there. As might he expected, she hecame reacquainted with the F.B.I. in 1952, when conscription reached something of a peak for the Korean trouhle. But this time she got no further than hushand numher two before her old friends from Washington flipped open their wallets in a gesture no longer necessary to announce an end to her career. She had take the precaution of hleaching her wonderful red hair a dazzling gold, hut hy then new procedures and safeguards were being exercised against "Allotment Annies." Notified hy the Pentagon of all spur-of-the-moment G.I. marriages and of all in which the hride lived only briefly with her serviceman hushand, the F.B.I. moved in swiftly.

AT 38, with her jail hitch hehind her, hlonde Alma was somewhat heavier than she had heen at her prime, had crows'-feet channeling out from her green eyes, hut was still woman enough to turn any man's head her way. And she was still her old obliging self with the Detroit reporters who traveled to Chicago, site of her latest escapade, to interview her.

No, she told them, Raskovitch never visited her in jail hack then, quit writing to her after a few months, didn't seek her out when her term ended. Zahho faded out of the picture early. "Not that I would have wanted them to hother about me," she said earnestly. "They took enough from me. I'm a sick woman."

The prohation authorities agreed with that. So did the court psychiatric panel. Alma Hawkins, as the court titled her in honoring none but her first marriage, was institutionalized in a sanitarium from which she never has sought release.

"Allotment Annies" continue their impulsive ventures to this day wherever soldiers and sailors gather to train. With I.B.M. machines and an educated, deft F.B.I. operating against them, none of them comes close to the impressive marital records run up by the joy girls of World War II. But they find their ways and means, marry two or three lonely recruits, and fade away behind prison walls, leaving in their wake men disillusioned early in their lives, embittered and hurt. END

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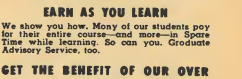
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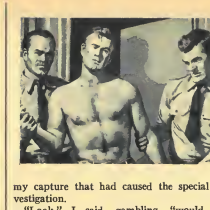
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Fräulein Torture

Continued from page 23

my capture that had caused the special investigation.

"Look," I said, gambling, "would the British send a spy who can't speak German properly to spy on a secret factory?"

"I know that," he muttered, "but what can we do here in the prison? Nothing."

I took the bull by the horns.

"As a good German soldier, which I'm sure you were, you can do something. The right thing. Write an anonymous postcard today to the Kommandant, Oflag, Biberach, and say I am here."

The little man looked worried.

"You must lie down now. In an hour's time you will be going back to—to town."

But as he closed the door he gave me a broad wink.

MY faith in the little warder gave me hope as the car swung into Gestapo headquarters. Perhaps, as an old soldier, he had a secret loathing of the evil system that had taken over his country, that bred men like Breck to whom honor meant the right to wield the whip.

Breck and Jennifer were huddled, unnecessarily close, over a file as I was brought into the room. Today, Jennifer had changed her hairstyle. The shining blonde mane was swept severely back behind her shell-like ears.

"Graeme," she said, smiling, "the factory in that wood near Lindau is on the top-secret list. You'll never be able to use the information, so there's no harm in telling you that it makes experimental parts for submarines which are tested on the waters of Lake Constance. Now do you understand the full implications of getting caught while trying to scale the perimeter wire?"

"I was doing no such thing. When I found the wire—"

"We have only your word," she interrupted.

I snorted. Breck adjusted his glasses and looked at me for a full minute.

"Herr Leutnant," he said finally, "you have my permission to take Fräulein Jennifer to lunch, if you answer my questions. What might happen after lunch—and a glass or two of kummel—is up to you."

He leered knowingly at the blonde.

"We could go for a bath in the river," she suggested.

Twice I had been flogged into unconsciousness. The slightest movement was appalling agony to my back.

"Batbe with you, and show my back to the public? They might think you do this to all your boyfriends."

"There are quiet places to batbe," she said.

"Then keep them for your boyfriends."

It was a queer situation. The fat Gestapo man sat and watched the play, while Jennifer tried her damnedest to seduce me with every movement of her body and nuance of her voice. I saw their angle, all right. Even if I wasn't a spy, I was in a tough spot, and might be induced to come over to their side in order to save my skin. There were plenty of uses for traitors in the war.

"You asked me, some time ago, where do we go from here? I can tell you, Graeme," the girl leered. "Unless you begin to show some sense, and quick, you'll go to Dachau."

She spat out the last word, and Breck nodded wisely.

"You know what that means?" he asked. "Roughly," I said with heavy sarcasm. "Who doesn't?"

"Very well, since you bave declined my offer, I shall take Jennifer to lunch myself. In the meantime, you will go downstairs. . . ."

"For a nice sadistic cocktail," I spat at him, but he ignored it.

"You will think differently after lunch, perhaps. You will not be bere again today, but Jennifer will be here to receive your answer. If it is the same, you will leave for Dachau tomorrow."

Suddenly it was as if the two were no longer in the room, as if I were alone. Waiting for the two thugs to take me downstairs, I felt a sudden revulsion for fellow human beings who could sink to such depths. This wasn't war. It was degradation.

"Oh, God," I thought, "this day, let me be brave. Let me be brave, O God. Just for today. . . ."

Perhaps I was brave that day. I don't really know. I felt only the first few lashes. I beard only the first few of my screams as the wounds on my festering back were savagely re-opened. Darkness came swiftly, and I fell first on my knees, then full length on the floor with the blows still raining down on me.

Again I was carried back to Breck's office and dumped in an armchair like a parcel of rags. Jennifer looked at me without emotion, her eyes the color of pale blue ice. She pushed the water over to me, the way one fills the sink before doing the dishes.

"Well?" she said.

My whole body shook, and I didn't bother to use the glass. I drank the cold water from the bottle, spilling a lot. My loathing for this brazen, immaculate bitch made my beart pound.

Without asking permission, I staggered toward the wash basin to rinse my burning hands. Just let her interfere, I thought grimly, and I'll kill her. Never before or since have I hated anyone with the cold intensity I felt for this woman. I knew I could wrench the life from her lovely body without the slightest twinge of remorse.

"Well?" she said again.

"No dice." My voice was a croak.

"Breck will be disappointed. He likes people to co-operate."

"I don't co-operate with the devil," I grunted.

"Oh, for God's sake—!"

"*Listen,*" I snarled, moving towards the desk. "You'll get nothing out of me. Nothing. Save your lousy threats. I don't want you, or anything you can offer. Tell Herr Bigmouth to keep his twisted insinuations to himself. While I'm at it, you might as well know that I despise you for what you are, and for what you're doing."

She watched me in silence, her mouth drooping in a hard, tight-lipped curve. She watched me lift a heavy paperweight from the desk. For a moment I considered smashing it down on that beautiful head.

I must have raised my voice, because an anxious little clerk poked his bead around the door. Jennifer told him to get out.

"I hope to God I never meet another woman like you as long as I live," I gritted out.

"You won't," she said. "You won't be around long."

"Then send for my cab."

I was in a state of utter collapse when I got back to my cell. That last emotional outburst, coming on top of the beating, had drained me of all reserves.

It was dark when a key turned softly in the lock. I raised myself beavily from the boards, and made out the figure of the old warder.

"I did what you wanted," he whispered. "They're sending me to Dachau tomorrow."

"I know. But when I heard that, I phoned the Biberach authorities. Someone should be here in the morning."

This little man, with no chance of reward, had put himself in a position of extreme danger to help me, a stranger. Unlike Brack's kind, be still thought that individuals were worth more than ideologies.

"I don't know how to thank you," I said, with a lump in my throat.

He looked at my pack on the shelf.

"Have you an Englisb cigarette?" be whispered.

My throat tightened. I nearly sobbed aloud. He looked at me, waiting for my reply. At last I recovered sufficiently to say, "Here, take the lot. I wish it was more."

AT eight the next morning the cell door opened and outside stood an *unterofizier* of the *Wehrmacht*.

"Come," he said.

I grabbed my pack and followed as quickly as my tortured body would allow. Once or twice, dizzy with pain, I bad to force myself to walk upright. There were no more formalities and we drove in peace to Ulm station, where we entered the buffet. The *unterofizier* bought two cups of coffee, and we sat waiting for the train to Biberach.

"I never thought," I said slowly, "that I'd ever be glad to see a German uniform."

He smiled. "You've had a bad time?"

"Bad time!" I exclaimed. I hesitated, then finished, cautiously, "Not too good, I guess."

He fished a small cigar from his pocket, lit it, and puffed slowly.

"I hope, *Leutnant* Panton, you will be more careful in the future. Escaping in Germany is a fool's game. Maybe you bave now been taught a lesson."

"Maybe," I said, but my mind was already way ahead, turning over the possibility of a more successful attempt. **END**



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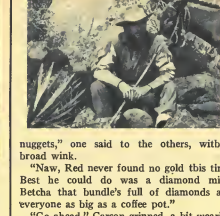
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Desert Rat's $20,000,000

Continued from page 19

nuggets," one said to the others, with a broad wink.

"Naw, Red never found no gold this time. Best he could do was a diamond mine. Betcha that bundle's full of diamonds and everyone as big as a coffee pot."

"Go ahead," Carson grinned, a bit wearily. "But, if one of you got my old room, you better get out."

"Nobody's got your old room," the amply-girthed landlady announced, as she entered in time to bear him. "I've been saving it for you."

"We're going down to Mac's," said Joe, who had spent his life working around the docks.

"You boys go ahead," she said. "I'll take care of the bundle and fix up the room. But don't get him drunk. And don't get drunk yourselves. You make too much noise."

Still ribbing bim happily the four boarders escorted Carson to Mac's Place.

Mac drew five beers, set them out, then reached across the bar with a welcoming hand. "On the house," he beamed.

"Yeah, I know," said Carson. "That's why these tramps came with me."

The five settled themselves at the big round table near the bar, so it would be easier to get refills. Eventually, the ribbing petered out. It was 1915 and the war in Europe, spreading with an all-consuming fire, occupied the questions of men.

Joe spread out the afternoon paper and, balf glancing at the news columns and balf still listening to Carson, said, "Well, you ain't got a gold mine, but there's plenty of gold in them plants turning out war orders. Nobody ever got such big wages. Maybe you'll go to work and figure out a new patent. How many you got now?"

"I don't know," said Carson, a bit sheepishly. "Enough, I guess."

"I'll bet if you had the money you spent prospecting and paying out for patents you wouldn't need a gold mine," said one.

"You said a mouthful," Carson agreed.

Joe looked up from the newspaper and called out:

"On me this time, Mac, but please don't get the table all wet. I don't want my paper soaked with more beer than these slobs are already spilling."

TURNING to Carson, be poked a finger at a story in the newspaper, spit into the spittoon set in the sawdust in front of the shiny brass rail, and chuckled:

"Now, why can't you think of something like this feller bere? Bunch of scientists met last night and one told about a way to smelt ore that saves a lot of labor costs."

"I figgered out something like that once," said Carson, "but that was a long time ago. Back in 1906, I think. Gee, it's so long ago I forgot about it. But, that's the way things are. You think of something and get nowbere and then somebody else thinks of something along the same line and probably gets rich."

"If they make speeches about it, he's probably plenty rich," said one enviously. "Probably got bimself a bouse with special faucets, but don't no water come out of 'em. Out of one comes cold beer and out of another comes whisky and out of a third—"

"And every room's got a beautiful woman just doing nothing but waiting for him to call her," another interrupted. "Boy, that's the way to live!"

Mac, leaning on the bar listening, joined in the good-natured ribbing:

"Why don't you guys leave him alone? You got to have brains to make inventions and Red's brains got dried up by the desert sun a long time ago."

Everyone, including Carson, grinned.

Joe eyed Carson impishly and growled: "Hey, Red, want to feel real bad? Listen to this. Now, why can't you invent something they'll talk about?"

He began to read quotations from a speech on a smelting process used by copper companies. As he read, Carson remembered how, nine years ago, he had returned as usual from a fruitless prospecting trip and got a job with a copper smelting company shoveling ore into a furnace. When the ore was in they would bank it to protect the walls from the fierce heat. Shoveling and sweating with the other laborers he had thought occurred to him that it would be much easier to build a chute above the furnace and feed the ore by machine into the blazing inferno. He knew that in the making of things labor costs were among the biggest items, and a chute would cut down on the labor costs. The idea was simple, yet no one had thought of it. It was like the untold thousands of years that man pulled things from one place to another before someone thought of using a round piece of wood and made the first rough wheel.

Back in his room he made a model of bis idea and took it to bis patent lawyer, had the drawings made and then forgot about it. As Joe read, the remembrance of the sweating, shoveling men in front of the furnace came back with a rush.

"Gimme that paper!" he shouted excitedly, grabbing it so that a glass of beer turned over, wetting the paper. "That's my invention that man is talking about!"

"Now, now, just take it easy," said Joe, startled. "Just take it easy. You're with friends."

"I'm telling you that's my invention. I got me a patent on it!"

"Of course you bave," said another soothingly. "And we ain't gonna let nobody take it from you. Now, why don't you just drink your beer nice and quiet? It's been hot out on the desert and you'll be all right in a couple of days."

"I tell you that's my patent," Carson in-

sisted. "I got me a patent on that back in 1906. I'm going to get me the best lawyer in the country and sue!"

"You do just that," said one dryly.

"Somebody better take him home," Mac suggested sympathetically. "Maybe the excitement of getting hack is just too much for him. Or maybe reading that somebody's patent is practical. I've heard of people going off—just like that, sudden like."

Carson let himself be led to his room, clutching the heer-soaked paper. He wanted to he alone to think of what he could do. From the description in the paper he was certain it was his patent, but he knew also that he had no money to hire lawyers. He slept little that night, his every turn creaking the old hrass hed.

HE had always helieved that finding a gold mine was mostly luck; some hit it and some didn't. To hit it everything had to be just right; and, during the night he kept marveling at the way things had fallen into place for him. Because of the war in Europe the chances would he slim normally that a speech on smelting copper would he reported in 'a newspaper; yet, it was, and on the very day he returned to the city. And, hecause his friends like to kid, one read the report aloud to tease him. Without those dovetailed happenings he most likely would have lived out his days, still seeking the always elusive gold and never suspecting that anyone had the slightest interest in one of his patents. He had the feeling of a card player with a streak of luck. No matter what he held or what he drew, he connected. Things were hreaking for him.

In the morning he went to his patent attorney and handed him the heer-stained paper.

"Is this my patent?" he asked.

The lawyer read the news report and checked his own files for details of Carson's patent application.

"I would say it is, but you can't sue on the basis of a newspaper report. I'll check and if it is your process, it could he worth millions to you."

"Millions?" said Carson, weakly.

"Millions," said the lawyer, and added, "If you're a little short of cash I can let you have some."

It was this offer, as Carson said later, that convinced him he really had a chance. It was the first time the lawyer, instead of telling him what the fee would be, offered to lend him money.

"Thanks," said Carson, "hut I'm doing all right."

The attorney took the case for a percentage of the royalties, since Carson had no money. The copper companies were notified that they were—and had heen—infringing on his client's patent. In turn the companies quickly checked the claimant and estahlished that he was a lahorer who did not have the money to finance a long legal fight. The companies did not even answer the letter.

When suit was filed on behalf of the penniless prospector with a demand for back royalties which could easily total millions, it caught the public interest. This was a hattle hetween a poor man and powerful companies, David against Goliath all over again, and the country watched the drama unfold. The day the case was heard in court the presiding judge eyed the impressive hattery of noted lawyers who appeared for the copper com-

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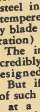
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panies, and then looked at the sun-dried face of the desert rat; he listened to the claims made by both sides and then threw the case out of court as having no merit.

The speed with which his dream was shattered rocked Carson. Then he got another hlow that floored him: his lawyer informed him he could not continue to handle the case. He said:

"If you reopen it this will be a long case. It will probahly go to the U.S. Supreme Court with the companies dragging it out for years. It will probably cost several hundred thousand dollars before it ends one way or another. I am sure they are infringing on your patent, hut it will take years and lots of money before it can be established and I just don't have that kind of time or money."

It was a miserable and discouraged man who returned to the boarding house. His friends, who had heen with him in court and now believed he really had invented the process, knew it would take money to hire lawyers. At Mac's Place they raised $814.27, including $100 from Mac, and took it to Carson's room. The prospector was touched by the gesture of friendship and faith and returned it with the explanation that his lawyer estimated it would cost several hundred thousand dollars to fight the case through to a finish.

They looked at him blankly. Joe, who acted as spokesman for the group, said, "That's more'n you can win from the suit!"

"He can win millions," another pointed out.

"There's no difference hetween several hundred thousand dollars and millions," Joe said. "You can't spend several hundred thousand no more than you can spend millions, so when you got several hundred thousand it's just the same as having millions."

Carson would probahly have died a penniless lahorer were it not for the common American belief that one man is as good as another. The other may have more money, or move in a more select social circle, or have more culture, but in essence the average Joe thinks he is just as good as anyone else. It was this belief that actuated Carson's next move.

ANYONE who read newspapers in 1915 knew that Rudolph Spreckles was one of the country's biggest capitalists and sportsmen. To the desert rat, Spreckles was a rich man who was said to take gambling chances on some business deals.

The day after his case was thrown out of court Carson went to Spreckels' office. As he entered the carpeted reception room he saw directly before him a soak door on which was neatly lettered: MR. SPRECKELS. But between him and that door was a husy office. Spreckels' private secretary finally came over and eyed the man with grimy finger nails and haggy suit who said he wanted to discuss a business matter with the noted financier. The secretary suggested that Carson write and outline his proposition and the letter would he called to Mr. Spreckels' attention.

"Mister," said Carson, uncomfortable in the presence of these spotlessly attired employees, "I want to talk with Mr. Spreckels—not correspond with him." With that he pushed the secretary aside and harged in on the financier.

The startled Spreckels looked up from his desk. "Yes?" he demanded. "What is it?"

"I'm George Camphell Carson," said the sun-tanned man, approaching with outstretched hand, "and I want to talk over a business proposition with you, but this jackal of yours wanted me to write you a letter. I ain't good at writing."

Spreckels saw the frightened faces of his staff peering in through the door and grinned. He recognized the name and said amiahly, "Sit down, Mr. Carson. You're the man who sued the copper companies, aren't you?" And to his staff he nodded and said, "It's all right. Mr. Carson forgot to tell you he bad an appointment with me."

"I did?" said Carson.

"It's hetter to tell 'em that," Spreckels chuckled, "otherwise they'll feel hadly that they let a man through without an appointment. Now, what can I do for you?"

"I need a grub stake of several hundred thousand dollars," Carson said simply.

SPRECKLES' hurst of laughter was heard through the oak door.

"Why pick me?"

"Because you're rich and a sportsman. I hear you take chances on business propositions."

"But not too great a chance," Spreckels cautioned.

"Anyway, my lawyer says it will cost several hundred thousand to fight the case. I've heen grub staked before but now I need a man-sized one. If you stake me, we can share what I get. What do you say?"

Spreckels' grin hroadened.

"Well," he said, "I've never been asked for a grub stake that size. But the idea intrigues me. I'll have my lawyers check your claim and then we'll see."

A half hour later the startled office staff saw the two men walk out together. The multimillionaire had his arm around Carson's shoulder.

"We're going to my house for a drink and lunch," announced Spreckels to his staff.

To Spreckels, the idea of a lahorer barging in with a request for a few hundred thousand dollars was a priceless story and he delighted in repeating it at his club.

"Not a bad grub stake," said the president of one bank.

"More than that," said the financier. "If his claim is valid I'm going to grub stake him and let a few of you in on a good proposition."

When Spreckels' lawyers informed him that copper companies did seem to be infringing on Carson's patent, the sportsman called in a few friends, organized a corporation called the Carson Investment Company, and had the prospector sign over all rights in the patent to the company in return for a sizable share of stock. Spreckels and the others bought the rest of the shares for several hundred thousand dollars. With the money they hired the shlest lawyers they could and reopened the case.

The fight lasted 13 years. During those years Carson worked at whatever jobs he could get or went out into the desert again, still hunting the gold that would make him a millionaire, always coming back more tired, more sun tanned, hut never discouraged. After several court skirmishes and the realization that Carson now had backing from rich and influential men, one of the copper companies approached the financier with an offer of settlement.

"If we accept," said Spreckels, "the in-

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vestors will make a nice profit and Mr. Carson will have a few thousand dollars—more than he ever had in his life. But Mr. Carson always dreamed of being a millionaire and I think every man is entitled to his dream."

Court after court found for Carson, and each time the copper companies appealed. Finally, in October, 1928, the U.S. Supreme Court, which had been asked to pass on the state decision for Carson, refused to review it, and thus ended the long fight between David and the copper Goliaths. The companies had infringed on Carson's patent and had to pay back royalties, and continue to pay royalties for the life of the patent.

There was joyous celebration on the waterfront Mac set them up on the house repeatedly. He had a millionaire for a regular customer and was proud of it. Reporters swarmed to the boarding house and the corner saloon. It was a victory in the Horatio Alger manner; it was a variation of Cinderella; it was evidence of democracy at work. Americans identified themselves with Carson and his dream and ate up columns of stories published in the newspapers. Reporters sought out Carson and wanted to know how it felt to be a millionaire.

"I don't know yet," he said with an infectious grin. "Right now I owe Joe here eight dollars and seventy cents, and he's waiting for me to get my first million, because he wants his money."

This was considered, and recorded as, a witticism. No one believed that a man who had multimillionaires for partners had to borrow eight dollars and seventy cents from a dock worker. And reporters particularly wanted to know how he could have forgotten a patent worth millions. Carson invariably shrugged.

"I don't know," he said honestly. "I got me a lot of patents and that was nine years ago. I never beard nothing from nohody so I guess I just forgot it until Joe read that story in the newspaper."

When the accounting was over the copper companies paid 20 million dollars in back royalties and Carson's share made him a multimillionaire. The man who bad devoted his life to a fruitless searcb for gold now had more of it than he bad ever dreamed of having. The ease and pleasures he had visualized while lying wrapped in an old blanket on the desert were now his for the buying. He moved out of his $150-a-week bedroom to the fashionable Clairmont on Noh Hill.

"I want the best suite you got," he said, scrawling bis name on the register.

THE clerk looked at the old, battered suitcase he bad borrowed.

"Only one bag, sir?" he asked, almost accusingly.

"Yeah, only one bag; but don't go to worrying about it. I'll buy me another, and maybe another suit of clothes, though it beats me why anyone wants more'n one. You can't wear but one at a time."

The clerk recognized the scrawled signature and even this comment was passed on to reporters. Carson had become a character. The clerk gave bim the best suite in the house. Carson sent for bis waterfront cronies and put them up in suites, too. They ordered up food, the best the Clairmont chefs could prepare, and his friends told him exactly what they thought of the fancy food—in colorful but unprintable language—and called for a simple stew or a ham sandwich. They were served aged whbskies and found them too mellow. The beds were too soft. They were unhappy with the swank suites and swankier food. Within a week an enterprising reporter discovered that Carson's friends often stole out of their suites to return to Mac's Place where you could get a big beer for a nickel and fill up on a free lunch not drowned in sauces. The story appeared on the front pages.

Nor was Carson happy.

One day be returned to Mac's and to the old boarding house and his back hall bed room for $1.50 a week. Reporters learned of it and found him and his cronies at the round table in Mac's, with big heers in front of them and good sandwiches. Carson and his friends looked relaxed and happy. To the reporters' questions the desert rat said simply:

"When a man gets older his dreams change. Now I don't care a whoop for fancy food. Mac's gruh is just fine. I got me good beer, a place to sleep, good food and my friends—and I made sure they stay with me all the time. I put 'em on the payroll. Every Saturday they get paid like they was working, and all they got to do is nothing. I don't pay them; they get paid by a bank. I signed papers so they get paid every week as long as they live so they don't bave to look to me. Now tbey can kid or growl or cuss me and they still get their pay.

"I learned me one thing: having millions is good only to help you do what you want to do. And that's what we're doing now. Now we're all millionaires."

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Captured Bomber

Continued from page 31

frequency. Wilkinson tested his guns and then rotated the turret gently from side to side, scanning the sky. They settled down to a period of nearly two and a half hours' flying before they would reach the position radioed by the Spitfire pilot. The rippling Mediterranean rushed by fifty feet beneath them. In the turret, Wilkinson watched Malta until it became a white cloud on the sea.

At a quarter-past eleven Brown began to pick up a cluster of blips on his search radar. He called the crew, and soon Strever and Dunsmore saw the strike leader waggle his wings and begin a gentle turn to starboard. Strever tucked in behind him. In the distance, perhaps eight miles away, they could see the Axis convoy, made up of a heavily laden merchantman and five destroyers with fighter cover, sneaking along in the shadow of Sapienza, peaceful and almost still. They turned into the attack, Strever still holding the Beaufort down fifty feet above the sea. He wondered if they had been seen. He looked quickly left and right and saw eight other Beauforts converging on the hub of the convoy like the spokes of a bicycle. They were all here so far.

The convoy was steaming away from them, and in order to get a beam shot the Beauforts swung away to port towards Sapienza and then turned back to make their run from the coast. There were two Beauforts going in ahead of Strever. The tanker was judged to be making about twelve knots and Strever laid off deflection on the torpedo-sight attached to his windscreen and called to Dunsmore to come out of the nose and sit beside him to drop the torpedo. The destroyers looked incredibly close and he wondered why they hadn't opened up yet.

THEN he saw a fierce rain heating on the water a few yards ahead and realised that they were flying through machine-gun fire. Tracer rushed at his eyes and at the last moment swerved away over his shoulder and was gone. Puffs of smoke hung around them, so still that they must be some distance away. He jinked as much as he dared at this height, then steadied the aircraft as the range closed to a thousand yards. He was used to the deceptiveness of distance over water but he could hardly believe that they were still more than half a mile away. Out of the corner of his eye he saw the Beaufort on his left pull up suddenly like a marionette on a string and then hang helplessly in mid-air before it turned on its back and crashed down into the sea. No chance for the boys in there. The merchantman looked incredibly close, eight hundred yards away. Strever called Dunsmore.

"Now!"

Dunsmore pressed the release button. "Torp gone."

Strever opened the throttles and they careered on until they passed directly under the hows of the tanker. Brown, at the side guns, saw the huttons of the tanker's gun-crew glinting in the sun. As they swept past the tanker's hows they ran into a curtain of fire from the escorting destroyers. Wilkinson called to say that the torpedo was running hard and true a few feet below the surface, but his message was drowned as the port engine cracked like a broken leg and Strever wound on right rudder trim as he swung the aircraft out of range.

Instinctively he turned the Beaufort back towards Sapienza. The port engine was a smoking wreck and the starboard engine was running roughly under the strain. Smoke began to filter through the fuselage, and with it came a clammy, cloying smell of oil. The oil-pressure reading on the port engine had fallen to zero and the starboard-engine pressure was falling rapidly. With no height it was hopeless to try to reach the coast. Better to ditch her now than risk a sudden engine failure and an uncontrolled dive into the sea.

He throttled back the good engine and called the crew. Brown sent out an SOS, but at this height there was scant hope of it being picked up. He clamped his key down and left the wireless seat to hrace himself. Wilkinson came out of the turret. The sea had roughened and as Strever eased hack the stick he felt the aircraft heing hufleted in gusting winds. The ditching was heavy and up in the nose Strever and Dunsmore once went under.

As soon as the aircraft came to a standstill Wilkinson, sitting hy the free gun hatch on the port side, jumped out on to the wing and tugged at the dinghy release. Brown made his way hack to the same hatch, and as he left the aircraft he saw Wilkinson about to step into the dinghy. The whole tail unit had snapped off just aft of the turret and was floating on its own a hundred yards away. Brown stepped quickly into the dinghy beside Wilkinson.

They watched the half-submerged Beaufort anxiously for some sign of Strever and Dunsmore. It looked impossible to make any rescue attempt with the front cockpit helow the surface. Then quite suddenly Dunsmore appeared clutching the navigation hag, followed by Strever, and the two men clamhered into the dinghy heside Wilkinson and Brown. Half a minute later the Beaufort ducked like a whale heneath the waves, less than twenty yards away.

Safely in the dinghy, they took stock of their position. They had the navigation hag, containing maps and codes and Very pistol and emergency rations, the dinghy rations, and the dinghy equipment. Dunsmore had a deep gash in his arm, and Wilkinson produced the medical kit from the dinghy equipment and administered first-aid. They were about five miles off Sapienza—enemy territory that now took on a cloak of friendliness and held the hope of succour. To the east they could see the oil-tanker, very low

in the water hut apparently not on fire. In the other direction they saw the last of the Beauforts disappearing towards Malta. Overhead, a Baltimore reconnaissance plane circled at 20,000 feet, perhaps fixing their position. Malta must be three hundred miles away. Suddenly they realized how near the Mediterranean was to being "Mare Nostrum," Mussolini's sea.

To attempt any other course than to reach Sapienza hardly occurred to them. Even that might prove beyond their powers. The decision to begin paddling towards the island was taken silently, unspoken. They stared sullenly towards Sapienza and captivity.

They paddled in the broiling heat of midday for three-quarters of an hour without making much headway. Already they were hot and thirsty and dispirited. They felt sure that the Italians had seen them go down and had left them to their fate. When they saw a Macchi 202 in the distance they watched it apprehensively, ready to dive overboard should they be attacked. The Macchi circled at five hundred feet and then made off.

The fact that the Macchi had not opened fire encouraged them to hope that rescue might be on the way. A few minutes later Wilkinson pointed excitedly towards the north.

"Look!" he shouted. "A seaplane! Could it possibly be one of ours?"

They watched the seaplane approaching steadily. Soon they could make out three radial engines and the clear outline of the floatplanes. No British aircraft were got up to look like that. It was an Italian Cant Z 506B.

The floatplane flew directly overhead and they watched awkwardly, sure that they had been seen and yet reluctant to signal for assistance. Soon the Cant returned and began to circle the dinghy, and presently it landed about fifty yards away. Rescue—and captivity—was at hand.

The Cant came to a stop and Strever and his crew began paddling toward it. They made little progress and the two groups of men eyed each other speculatively. Then Strever, bowing to the inevitable, stripped and dived over the side, covering the distance to the Cant in swift, strong strokes. When he reached it he was courteously received by the Italian crew, who hauled him aboard and showed a charming anxiety to be friendly. He wondered if they knew about the tanker.

DRAWING on an unsuspected acting ability, Strever explained in pantomime what had happened and the Italians nodded delightedly, offering him a large tot of hrandy and a cigarette. Strever, trying hard to remember what he knew of the Geneva Convention, refused neither. The Italians then handed him a length of rope, one end of which was fastened to the Cant fuselage. Strever swam with it back to the dinghy. When he reached it he gave the thumhs-up sign.

"We're in," he said.

In Strever's absence they had put all the guns and maps and codes in the navigation bag, fastened it securely and dumped it over the side. Strever climbed hack into the dinghy and the Italians hauled on the rope. Soon they were all aboard the floatplane.

The captain of the Cant said his name was Alessandro Chifari. His crew consisted of a navigator, flight engineer and wireless operator. When the rest of Strever's crew had been given a tot of brandy, Chifari told them in pidgin English to sit aft and not to move about. The flight engineer leered at them genially. "For you the war is over—yes?" No one felt inclined to argue.

The engines were restarted and Strever and his crew could feel the motion of taxying. The sea was rough and there was no attempt to take off. From their position in the aft of the fuselage they could see nothing. Strever gathered from the pilot's dumh-show that there were bombs or depth charges on hoard and that they were taxying towards the channel hehind Sapienza into smoother water for the take-off. After an uncomfortable half-hour the water seemed calmer, and the engines roared as the pilot opened the throttles. The take-off run seemed interminahle and they thought uneasily of the depth charges. The noise inside the fuselage was deafening, and after the take-off speech became impossible. They had little idea of their direction, but they kept careful note of their airborne time in case some clue should offer itself when they landed.

The flight lasted exactly two hours. Strever felt fairly sure that they had travelled in a northerly direction. When the Cant finally came to rest they were disembarked on to a jetty and an escort party took charge of them. They wondered whether they might he already in Italy. They were taken hy car to what Strever thought must be the local headquarters. Here they were interrogated. Question after

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question about their last operation, about their base, about aircraft strengths at Malta, about their squadron, was fired at them, but they resolutely refused to give any information other than name, rank and number. No real pressure was brought to bear and eventually they were taken to the Officers' Mess. There was a carefree atmosphere amongst the Italians, as though the war were a long way away, and Strever felt more sure than ever that they had flown nor-nor-west that afternoon and were still on one of the many islands off south-western Greece.

AT Officers' Mess they were given civilian clothes to change into, which were welcome as their khaki drill was soaked in seawater. Four huge plates of macaroni were then placed in front of them, and as they had not eaten for over twelve hours they tucked in with a will. When they thought the meal was over, four steaks were brought in. After the ubiquitous tinned stew of the previous weeks, their appetites were voracious and they ate the steaks with gusto. The meal ended with more brandy and cigarettes, and they were given the run of the Mess for the rest of the day. Later in the evening they were given writing materials and told that they could write to their next of kin.

"Where are we?" asked Strever.

The Italians would not answer this question, so Strever tried another tack.

"Where are we going?"

"Taranto," said one of the Italian officers. That meant that they were definitely not yet in Italy. Later the only Italian officer who spoke any English told them that they were to be flown to Taranto next morning for internment in a prison camp. "That is bad," said the Italian ominously. They'd got more out of the Italians than the Italians had got from them.

"Tomorrow bad, tonight good," said the Italians. They realized even more fully what was meant when they were taken to bed. Four of the Italians had given up their two double rooms so that their prisoners should pass a comfortable night.

Strever paired off with Dunsmore, and the two New Zealanders shared the second room. Guards were posted in the passage and outside the windows. They began to feel at last that they were prisoners, and found the realization disturbingly and surprisingly unpleasant. Their captors' words echoed in their minds. *Tomorrow bad.*

On the wall of the New Zealanders' room was a map of the Adriatic Sea and the Grecian coast. Brown and Wilkinson turned towards it eagerly. Somewhere on that map was the spot in which they were spending the night. They plotted the approximate position of the Axis convoy, and then looked for land some two hours flying in a northerly direction.

"We're somewhere here," said Wilkinson, tapping the map. "Levkas—or perhaps as far south as Corfu. It's a hundred to one we're somewhere in that area."

"There's Taranto!" said Brown. "Should be about an hour and a half's flying."

Wilkinson did not speak again for some time. When he did eventually break the silence, Brown was nearly asleep.

"I'm going to get out of this mess if I can," he said.

They were awakened at seven o'clock next morning, and breakfasted well on eggs (the first they'd seen for many weeks), bacon, tomatoes, toast and coffee. While they were at breakfast they were left alone for a few moments. Instantly they began to discuss the possibility of escape.

"I've worked out where we are," said Wilkinson. "Either Levkas or Corfu. Taranto can't be more than about two hundred miles. If we don't do something quickly we'll be in a P.O.W. camp by lunch-time."

"Not a hope here," said Dunsmore. "We've as much chance of eluding them here as a bunch of film-stars at a world première. Better wait till we get to Taranto."

"You know what they say," said Strever. "The best chances come immediately after capture. Once they get us to Taranto there'll be no more of this being fêted like transatlantic flyers. Life'll start to get tough then."

"Has anyone thought of trying to capture the aircraft and fly it to Malta? Malta's about three hundred and fifty miles, I reckon."

"I've thought of it, Wilkie," said Strever. "I thought of it yesterday. We probably had a better chance then than we'll get



"You're up for parole today, Murphy, but I'm sure you'd rather stay and finish the tunnel you've been working on."

today. They're bound to mount a guard on us now. Still, we'll keep our eyes open."

"Look out," said Brown. The guards had arrived to escort them to the jetty. They had no further chance to discuss escape.

The whole Italian headquarters staff seemed to have preceded them to the jetty to see them off. Everyone wanted to shake hands with them and take pictures, and as they boarded another Cant floatplane—not the same one as the previous day, and a different crew—a battery of cameras clicked into action. Strever could not help contrasting the carefree atmosphere here with the grim bitterness of life at Malta. Life here was leisurely and luxurious and food and drink plentiful. Life at Malta was bectic and austere. It was hard to believe that their two countries were locked in a desperate battle for survival. Strever tried hard to recapture the bitter enmity of the fighting, but the gaiety of his captors disarmed him. Resenting the feeling of goodwill that abounded, he stepped quickly into the plane.

The Cant crew consisted of pilot, second pilot, engineer, wireless operator/observer, and a corporal acting as escort, armed with a .45 revolver that looked as though it had been rescued from a museum. Strever and his crew entered the plane first, followed by the guard. Then came the Italian crew, in bigb spirits, each carrying two or more large cases, which they dumped in the fuselage. They were going home on leave. The flight was part and parcel of the party, and the holiday spirit was already abroad.

The Italian pilot introduced himself. "Captain Gatetama Mastrodrasa, at your service." He grinned, showing a set of incredibly white, even teeth. "We go to Italy on leave. I see my bamhino"—he rocked an imaginary bahy in his arms—"for the first time. For you, it is bad." He shrugged his shoulders and opened the palms of his hands, then turned on his heel and went forward to the pilot's seat.

SPACE was restricted in the crew compartment of the Cant and the nine men were in close proximity to each other. Pilot and second pilot sat in the front of the perspex cockpit, with the corporal escort standing behind and between them, facing backwards. Next came the wireless operator and flight engineer. In the hack of the elongated crew compartment Strever and his crew squatted on the floor.

They were airhorne at 0940. That meant that they ought to reach Taranto about 1110, barring accidents. They sat quietly and tried to look relaxed and resigned. Nevertheless the corporal's helt and holster fascinated them. How quick would be he on the draw? What firearms might the other members of the crew have ready to band? And if they could turn the tables on the Italians, what then? Could they effectively subdue the whole crew and at the same time fly an unfamiliar aircraft and navigate it from an unknown point to a tiny island notoriously hard to find, without radio and perhaps without maps?

Well, it might he worth a try.

Staggering along under an overload of men and luggage, unable to climb above a thousand feet, where the air was sickeningly humpy and unhearahly hot, the Cant made slow and unsteady progress towards the heel of Italy. Four men faced the prospect of years of imprisonment. Four men were

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going on leave. Poised between the two parties, a kind of neutral umpire, stood the corporal guard.

The corporal sat down behind the pilot. It was a bad day for a non-flyer; a wretched day for a ground type with a queasy stomach. The corporal felt the sweat pouring from his forehead. Yet he felt cold. He longed to be warm. He was sure each again. How long had they said? Ninety minutes? They could hardly he half-way yet. He found himself swallowing incessantly. His head ached intolerably and he longed to lie down. Up-currents and down-draughts played battledore and shuttlecock with his stomach. He gritted his teeth fiercely, determined not to he sick. His eyeballs felt like roundshot. His jowls drooped. His energy was spent and he felt an overwhelming apathy. If only the plane would crash or something. Anything to get down on the deck.

WILKINSON sat facing the wireless operator/observer, whose log sheets were strewn on the navigation table between them. Behind the observer sat the corporal, his face a ghastly parchment. Wilkinson looked at his watch: 1025. They must he about half-way. They daren't leave it much longer. Perhaps a fighter escort might he sent to meet them. Soon they would be picked up hy the Italian coastal radar. It was now or never.

Somehow he had to distract the observer's attention and get his hands firmly planted on the airsick corporal's gun.

The only thing he knew was a schoolboy affair. You pointed suddenly out of the window and wnile your victim turned his head away you had him momentarily at your mercy. Schoolboys were used to the trick and didn't always buy it. He would have to take a chance with this fellow.

"Look!"

The observer turned his head, and instantly the window clouded into an opaque blackness and then splintered into stars as Wilkinson's fist sank into his jaw. There was no recoil. Wilkinson allowed the impetus of the punch to carry him past the table; then he plunged over the observer's slouched body and snatched at the corporal's revolver. His hands closed over it greedily and he tore at it with all his strength. Next moment the pistol was in his hands, and as the corporal fell back into the pilot's lap he handed the pistol to Strever, who had quickly unclipped the gun from Dunsmore and Brown to attend to the observer and flight engineer. The corporal fell between the pilot and the control column, and as he struggled to free himself he fouled the controls and sent the floatplane into a steep dive. Wilkinson, flung forward like a piece of loose cargo, caught the corporal by the scuff of the neck and with a Herculean effort lifted him clear.

By this time Strever was pointing the gun coolly in the pilot's ribs, helieving the day had heen won, unaware that the second pilot was in the act of turning a Luger on him.

Brown, holding down the stunned observer, saw the Italian second pilot swing triumphantly around with the Luger. Another second and their dreams of capturing the aircraft would he over. The nearest missile to hand was a seat-cover. He gathered it and hurled it with one movement. The seat-cover flew through the air unerringly, striking the Luger and knocking it from the second pilot's grasp. Instantly there was a free-for-all as the two crews struggled for possession of the Luger. Strever kept the pilot covered while Dunsmore hooked the Luger out of the scrum hack to Wilkinson. The morale of the Italian crewmen was broken.

But Captain Mastrodrasa was not done with yet. He kept the Cant in a steep dive, determined to foil the Beaufort crews' escape by landing the Cant on the sea.

Strever hrandished the revolver hefore his eyes, and then raised it as though he would smash in the Italian's skull. The horizon came down from above them like a blind as the Cant floatplane slowly levelled out.

Meanwhile Dunsmore and Brown were busy tying up the rest of the crew with a length of mooring hawser. Dunsmore tied them up while Brown seized a monkey-wrench from the tool-kit and stood poised above them.

"One move out of any of you and I'll dong you," he shouted, swinging the wrench. The Italians understood the gesture. The Italian captain, too, was hustled back to be tied up, but every time Dunsmore thought he had them firmly secured, the Italians shook their heads and wriggled their wrists to show that they could still-free themselves. Eventually Dunsmore tied them up with their trouser-belts.

Strever took over the controls and turned the floatplane ninety degrees to port of their previous track in the rough direction of Malta. For one glorious moment they relaxed, breathless and dishevelled, flushed and exultant, revelling in a sense of freedom and power undisputed masters of the plane in which they had heen travelling to Italy two minutes earlier as prisoners of war.

But the Italians moved passed swiftly as the hazards of the flight ahead of them crystallised in their minds. Dunsmore sat at the navigation table and worked out a course, hut they were still uncertain of their take-off point and previous track and had only a hazy notion of their present position. Dunsmore turned the navigation compartment upside down hut could find no maps. Evidently the Italians were confirmed coast-crawlers.

STREVER, steering the rough course given him hy Dunsmore, was acutely conscious of the dangers facing them. Malta was nearly twice as far as Taranto. They did not know the speed or the endurance of the Cant. Navigation without maps and with an airspeed indicator registering in kilometres was the purest guesswork. If they ran out of petrol and failed to get within sight of Malta, no one would know where to look for them, neither the Italians nor the British. It was essential that he discuss their situation with Dunsmore. Two heads were hetter than one. He called Dunsmore.

"Get that second pilot untied, will you? I'm going to put him in the seat and come back for a conference."

The Italian second pilot was duly released and pushed into the pilot's seat.

"Keep on that heading," shouted Strever, gesticulating and pointing to the compass. And so that the Italian should he in no doubt as to their destination he added "Malta, Malta."

The Italian turned to him in anguish.

"Malta?" The word means only one thing to the second pilot. His eyes bulged. "Spitfires!" He made a motion describing machine-gun fire and the demise of the Cant. Strever grinned and went hack to talk to Dunsmore. They would cross that bridge when they came to it.

Strever and Dunsmore together ransacked the aircraft for maps in vain. Then between them they began to reconstruct on a blank sheet of paper the approximate slant of the Greek coast up towards the Adriatic, the thin heel and toe of Italy, the appendage of Sicily, and somewhere south of Sicily two arbitrary blobs that represented Malta and Gozo. It was like sticking a pin in a list of runners. They showed their cartography to the Italian navigator, who shook his head violently. They freed his wrists and he snatched Dunsmore's pencil and made swift corrections, like a lightning artist. Strever and Dunsmore repleated their position.

"What do you think?" asked Strever.

"I DON'T think we can he far out," said Dunsmore. "I've been squinting at the compass all the time and plotting a mental course. Keep on this track for another half-hour. If we see nothing by then, we'd better turn due west and make a landfall on the toe of Italy or on Sicily. Then we can set course again for Malta."

"If we've still got any petrol," said Strever. They would look funny running out of petrol off Italy or Sicily with five Italian prisoners. That would put them right back where they were.

Strever went forward to keep an eye on the Italian second pilot. Brown got into the gun turret and kept watch for other aircraft, while Wilkinson tried to pick up the Malta beacon on the radio. The radio controls were extremely complicated, and he could find no trace of any homing device on the receiver. He thought he might be ahle to make the transmitter work, but in doing so they would probahly give themselves away to the Italians. Better to leave well enough alone.

As the floatplane plodded on in a southwesterly direction, Strever took over the controls from time to time to familiarise himself with them and to guard against any attempt at re-turning the tahles by the Italians. After they had been on the Malta heading for an hour without any sight of land, Dunsmore went forward and spoke to Strever.

"Time's up," he said. "We'd hetter try and make a landfall."

Strever turned the Cant to starhoard towards the Italian coastline, and they watched anxiously for a sight of land. They must now be overdue at Taranto, and aircraft might be searching for them. It would he too soon yet for an air/sea rescue search, but aircraft already airhorne might he alerted. Apart from the Cant and its crew, the capture of an entire Beaufort crew must he something of a prize.

It was not long before they sighted land, almost certainly the heel of Italy, but they were too far distant yet for an accurate fix. Strever brought the Cant down low over the sea to avoid the Italian coastal radar. As they neared the coast they saw a ship streaming across their path. Strever held on grimly, waiting for the flak to rise, but none came.

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"Get a load of that," he said. "Packed with Jerry soldiers."

"I'll make a note of its position and course, anyway," said Dunsmore. "They'll be pretty interested back at base." He laughed nervously, aware that he had said something that sounded strangely anachronistic.

"Junkers 52 formating on us," shouted Brown from the turret. Strever held his course, hardly daring to look round, feeling like a thief. Brown waited until the German aircraft was some three hundred yards distant and then dipped his guns in salute, ready to fire them instantly if the Junkers 52 looked at all belligerent. After two or three tense minutes, in which even the German aircraft itself seemed to be eyeing them suspiciously, it pulled away to the north. Strever and Dunsmore then bent to the task of making a landfall and setting course for Malta.

As they neared the toe of Italy Strever glanced once again at his watch, 1130. They had been airborne for an hour and fifty minutes, and it might be another hour or more before they reached Malta. They must get their fix and turn south as soon as possible.

Brown noticed that the Italian flight engineer was struggling with his bonds and that his face was strangely contorted. He kept pointing forward until Brown realised what he was trying to say. The petrol-tanks needed changing over.

Brown untied the engineer's hands and went forward with him. The Italian switched the cocks over and then pointed dramatically to his watch. They understood his meaning clearly enough. The petrol-tanks would run dry by 1230.

Strever eyed the Italian critically. It might be a trick to persuade them to abandon the idea of attempting to reach Malta. Somehow he didn't think so. He swung the aircraft round on a southerly heading and waited for Dunsmore to give him a course for Malta. Working from an improvised map was hazardous, but visibility was good. They would see Malta all right.

For the next hour they lumbered steadily on, scarcely a word being spoken, each man thinking his own thoughts. If they missed Malta they would stooge on into nothingness. A moment would come when they must stop heading south and begin a square search for Malta. Choosing that moment was the problem. If they stopped too soon they would find nothing. If they kept on too long they would have no endurance left for any kind of search.

Suddenly the Italians became voluble. "No benzine," they shouted. "Benzine kaput." The gauges were reading zero. Strever himself could see that. He called Wilkinson and Brown.

"We must be pretty close to Malta," he said. "For God's sake keep a sharp lookout. And we'd better release the Eyeties. We don't know what sort of reception we'll get from Malta. We can't leave these devils tied up if we're going to get shot down."

"Do you think they'll try anything?"

"I'm certain they won't," said Strever. "They know even better than we do that we're nearly out of gas. See that they put life-jackets on. And keep them as quiet as you can."

Wilkinson and Brown released the rest of the Italian crew and then continued scanning the horizon. The two gunners had never really considered the possibility that Strever and Dunsmore might fail to find Malta. Now they could see the exploit that had begun so triumphantly tapering away into disaster, by sheer were as

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helpless to prevent as their five prisoners.

Five minutes later Brown shouted at the top of his voice, wildly and ecstatically, "Malta!"

Strever corrected him. "Gozo," he said, "but I think I can see Malta too." The time was 1240. The last and perhaps most dangerous lap lay ahead.

The tension increased as the outline of Malta began to sharpen. They wanted to be seen, in case the petrol-tanks ran dry in the next few minutes: but on the other hand they knew well enough the kind of reception a single Italian aircraft would get from Malta's Spitfires. Strever handed the controls over to the Italian again and made him fly the aircraft almost at sea-level. If things went badly for them they could always make a quick landing on the sea.

What a surprise the chaps would get at Malta! Creeping in under the island's radar screen, they were now only three miles offshore. Malta looked pale and beautiful, serene and indomitable. Another few moments and they would be there. The whole aircraft seemed to hold its breath.

It was as they sighted the wireless masts above Valetta that the ten Spitfires came rushing at them out of the sun.

Dunsmore instantly took off his white singlet and trailed it out of the cockpit in token of surrender. In the turret Brown spun the guns about as the recognised signal to show the fighters he was not going to fire. But the ten Spitfires, strung out in follow-the-leader fashion, came relentlessly on.

The first Spitfire opened up at point-blank range with cannon and machine-gun fire and the smooth surface of the Cant's starboard wing splintered and twisted into an ugly pock-marked sheet of scrap metal. Strever shouted to the Italian pilot to come down on the water. As the floatplane slewed round drunkenly on the sea the three engines coughed and spluttered and then cut dead. They had run out of petrol.

Immediately the aircraft was still, Strever and his crew rushed out on to the wings and waved frantically to the Spitfire pilots. The whole formation was circling overhead. Mercifully, the fighter boys flipped their firing buttons to safe and, after a long look at the Cant to satisfy themselves that it was properly winged, they returned in formation to Malta. Strever and his crew watched them disappear. Already the air/sea rescue boys would have been alerted, and they waited impatiently to be picked up, longing to set foot again on Malta, produce their prisoners and tell their story.

NOW that the incident was so nearly ended, Strever and his crew felt a twinge of conscience at the way they had treated the Italians. What a way to repay the kindness of their captors from the moment of rescue right up to the start of this trip! But the Italians were cheerful and seemed to bear no illwill. They opened their voluminous bags and brought out the brandy and wine and cigarettes they had been taking on leave. When the air/sea rescue launch arrived one and a half hours later, its crew were greeted by nine mellow men. END

EDITOR'S NOTE: *Strever and Dunsmore were awarded the D.F.C. and Wilkinson and Brown the D.F.M. for their spectacular performance.*

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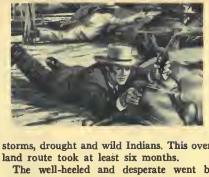
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Gunslinger

Continued from page 25

storms, drought and wild Indians. This overland route took at least six months.

The well-heeled and desperate went by steamer to Chagres, the main port on the Atlantic side of the Isthmus of Panama. At Chagres, steamers and windjammers from all over the western world dropped anchor and dumped their frenzied passengers. They scrambled wildly across the green hell of jungle by river boat and mule in the hope of finding a ship waiting at Panama City on the Pacific side to carry them to the Gold Coast. By the Panama route, for the fantastically lucky, it was possible to travel from New York to California in two months. The unpredictable adventure on the route was the passage across the Isthmus.

They stood at the steamer rail and conversed in low tones with the sailors who had been to Chagres so many times.

"The Isthmus is only forty miles across, isn't it?"

"As the crow flies."

"That's not too far."

"Not if you're a crow. But you have to go 45 miles upstream in a river boat called a *bungo*, and then ride or walk twenty miles of jungle trail."

"All right—65 miles. What's 65 miles?"

"More things can happen to you in that 65 miles than in a thousand anywhere in North America."

"What, for instance?"

"Well, there's crocodiles in the rivers and snakes hanging in the trees, and the jungle is full of tarantulas, pumas and black panthers."

"I'm well armed."

"So you are. But can you shoot cholera, dysentery, or Yellow Jack?"

"No, but . . ."

"And if what I said don't get you, there's always the Derienni."

"The Derienni? What's that?"

"The Land Pirates, that's what! Just you wait."

"All right, I'll wait. Some of these people may die crossing the Isthmus, but I won't. I'll live! I'll get to California and get my gold! And I'll take it home to Ma and the kids and we'll live like nabobs for the rest of our lives!"

THE *Orus* raised the mouth of the Chagres River in due course and anchored below the dark castle of San Lorenzo. Runnels paid the usual two-dollar fee and was transported, bag and baggage, across the hounding white-capped waves to Yankee Chagres in a 25-foot hollowed log called a bungo, paddled by a naked Negro boatman.

He saw a town of buildings like packing crates settling in the oozy mud along crooked streets surrounded by jungle. An appalling stink bung over everything. There was no graveyard and no sewage disposal system. All refuse was thrown into the river. Runnels had seen two bodies floating there as he was rowed in.

Yankee Chagres had a small permanent population of express agents, innkeepers, gamblers, harflies and prostitutes. Across the river was a still more dismal village of cane huts and hovels. This was the original town of Chagres, now called "native" Chagres, held in great loathing by the citizens of Yankee Chagres.

Runnels entered the Silver Dollar Saloon and bought a drink of poor whiskey wbich cost a dollar. Prostitutes solicited bis business and hlack clouds of cockroaches flew everywhere. That evening in the Silver Dollar, Runnels was treated to a graphic dramatization of the way of life and death on the Yankee Strip. Just as the Spanish orchestra struck up a *varsovienne*, a shot rang out and a man standing at the bar next to Runnels crumpled to the floor, shot in the back. As the faro dealer tried to shake a derringer from his shirt cuff, another shot crashed out and the dealer sprawled back in his chair, his face frozen in a hideous grin, a large red stain blooming on his shirt front.

Three masked men with guns and sacks went quickly through the bar, sweeping coins from the gambling tables and robhing the customers of their wallets.

Runnels let his hands lie quietly on the har in front of him while he was relieved of his wallet. Most of his cash was in his moneyhelt and, anyway, an unlimited expense account awaited him in Panama City. No use getting himself killed at this stage of the game. He noted wryly and with admiration that during the entire holdup the Spanish orchestra did not miss a heat of the *varsovienne*.

Next day Runnels was off for Panama City, by bungo to Cruces and then hy the gold trail through the jungle to the other ocean. The Derienni were occupied elsewhere. He made the passage without mishap.

Panama, the oldest city in North or South America, was a city of old stone buildings and unkempt green plazas. She had been invaded countless times. The Conquistadors had come, the pirates of the Spanish Main, the buccaneers, and now the wildest invasion of all—the fierce-eyed, gold-crazy Yankees en route to San Francisco.

Enterprising ticket agents had sold most of the gold hunters through-tickets from the Eastern Seaboard to San Francisco. These agents failed to reveal one small fact to their customers: steamer service from Panama City to San Francisco was grossly inadequate to move even a fraction of the thousands that the Atlantic steamers kept dumping at Chagres. Panama, as a result, was filled to hursting with disgruntled gold hunters waving their useless tickets. They crowded into the primitive hostels, ate the terrihle food in the so-called American restaurants, drank the poisonous whiskey, and dallied with the painted harridans, who refused to remove their gun belts even while

servicing a customer. They gamhled away their grubstakes and fought like caged animals to relieve their tension, waiting for steamers that seldom came.

Finally, they might ship out for San Francisco in any sort of scow or hulk that looked even slightly seaworthy. The Mexican coast as far as Acapulco was dotted with the wrecks and corpses of many of these voyages.

At the Lavista Hotel in Panama City, the desk clerk smiled in a superior manner at Runnels' request to see Mr. William Nelson, the American consul.

"Mr. Nelson is the busiest man in Panama," he said. "You may leave your name and I will endeavor to secure an appointment for you with him. Within two weeks, perhaps."

RUNNELS tore off the corner of a copy of the *Panama Star* and scribbled, "I have arrived. R. R." A few minutes after the note was sent up, Runnels was seated in conference with the American consul of Panama. Also in the room were representatives of the British and French governments and executives of the large express companies.

"Mr. Runnels," said Nelson, "you have crossed the Isthmus, so it won't be necessary for me to describe the evil and lawless conditions that prevail on the Yankee Strip."

"I was afforded the opportunity to observe the conditions," said Runnels wryly, recalling the corpses in the water at Chagres and the shootings and robbery in the Silver Dollar Saloon.

"International diplomacy has broken down in trying to settle the situation," said Nelson. "The American, French and British governments have all volunteered to furnish military troops to police the Strip, but the government of New Granada has refused our aid.

"Maybe the government of New Granada is in cahoots with the Derienni," observed Runnels.

Nelson shook his head. "I don't believe so. New Granada is against any foreign troops policing the Strip because they are afraid some foreign power might try to retain control or sovereignty after the Rush is over. A railroad is under construction and someday there may be a canal. It would be a prize for any country."

The French representative smiled. "We must therefore make our own private arrangements, *n'est-ce pas?*"

"And work in the utmost secrecy," said the British consul. "New Granada must not have the slightest inkling such a plan is afoot. It would be a serious affront. They might close the Yankee Strip to all foreign travel."

"What's the plan?" asked Runnels.

Nelson looked grim. "We have heard of your reputation and qualifications and sent for you to do a job for us here on the Isthmus. We are hiring you as a private citizen to bring law and order to the Yankee Strip."

"By what means?"

"By any means whatsoever. The methods are your business. You will be advanced all the money you desire. But if you accept the job, you will he completely on your own and the identities of your employers must remain a secret."

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gave Runnels on the Yankee Strip. He would be his own police force, judge, jury and executioner. But if he found himself in a position where he had to reveal the identities of his employers, they would disown him as a liar. It was a unique situation. Runnels wanted the job but he also wanted a little legality. He obtained an audience with Urratia Anino, governor of the province of New Granada.

THE exact arguments that Runnels used on this violent and officious Latin have not come down to us. But at the end of the interview Runnels carried away the following document hearing the governor's grandiose signature at the bottom:

"In the interest of restoring and maintaining order in this territory, I hereby confer on Ran Runnels and his appointed deputies unlimited power to suspend all legal processes as they see fit, and to adjudge and execute any and all punishments, including the death penalty, without jury trial or other formality and without accountability to any authority whatever."

Then the pint-sized gunman went about his business, his conscience clear that he actually had received legal sanction. He did not know that Governor Anino had absolutely no authority to confer such powers on anyone.

Runnels began his law enforcing program in a peculiar way; he formed his own express company on the Yankee Strip. A small advertisement appeared in the Panama Star: "Runnels Express Service. Panama-Gorgona or Ocean-to-Ocean. Prompt. Safe. Ran Runnels, Prop."

Old hands sneered at the idea of Runnels, a Johnny-come-lately, opening up in competition with the big express companies already operating in the area. The big boys would squeeze him out in short order. But in spite of dire predictions, Runnels Express prospered. The little man seemed to have a gift for buying horses and mules where no one else could, and in a short time obtained profitable freight contracts at both ends of the Strip. Within two months he was employing over a hundred drivers to carry his freight. Sharp observers wondered why he employed so many. He could have carried the same volume of business with sixty drivers. Many of his men seemed to have nothing more to do than loiter on the docks and around saloons and gambling halls, spending their high wages and keeping their mouths shut.

Violence went on unchecked. Guns barked in the dense jungle and mules without riders turned up every day along the gold trail. The Derienni massacred whole hungo boatloads of travelers on the Chagres and struck repeatedly at the gold bearing pack trains. Buzzards circled the skies above the green jungles, marking these little dramas.

Runnels did not concern himself closely with the details of his express business. He spent most of his days and evenings gambling with local business men at the Lavista Hotel and racing horses at the Juan Franco race track. His luck at the tables and the track was apparently phenomenal, for soon he was the owner of a large stable of blooded race horses. His manner was always gentle and polite. People began to look upon him as a sort of Wild West masquerader who carried the big bone-handled revolvers as props.

Observers noted, however, that his drivers and muleteers were constantly reporting to him, whispering in his ear in the gambling halls and barrooms. Apparently, they were keeping him abreast of his business affairs on the Isthmus.

Losses to the gold trains were higher than ever. A Zachrisson & Nelson train was robbed of $120,000 on the Cruces trail. Shortly afterward the steamship *Northerner* docked at Panama City from San Francisco, bringing $2,600,000 in gold express and 500 successful prospectors loaded down with the golden dust en route home. The express agents handed together all the available pack animals on the Isthmus and formed one huge train for mutual protection. They made a formidable array as they set out to cross the Strip. At the Gorgona fork, the Derienni struck. A pistol barked and masked horsemen materialized from the steaming jungle.

"*Arriba!*" shouted the Derienni, and the prospectors threw up their hands in terror. The robbers jerked the heavy-laden, gold-carrying mules from the line and began to search the miners for their personal pouches. A quick-drawing miner flashed his revolver and blasted the robber chief. There was a drum fire of angry pistol shots up and down the line and the Derienni fled from the infuriated miners. But they killed four miners and took over $150,000 in loot.

The greatest single loss came in Septemher, when a pack train was robbed of $250,000 in gold express near the same Gorgona fork. Two drivers were killed during the wild melee.

Runnels was hailed hefore the secret committee in Consul Nelson's suit at the Lavista Hotel. Faces were grim. "We've waited months now, and still no results, Mr. Runnels."

"The results are there, Mr. Nelson. They will show up in time."

Nelson shook his head. He was a busy and harried man. His own government and the express companies were giving him no rest concerning crime on the Isthmus. "I'm afraid you must show some results at once. Why don't you guard the gold trains or help reorganize the emigrants into protective groups? Make a show of force."

Runnels lit a Spanish cigar and shook his head. "I don't want to give the game away. When I'm ready I'll strike and strike hard."

"When will that be?"

"When my list is complete."

Nelson stared impatiently. "When will that be, man? People are dying every day."

RUNNELS rose and ambled to the door, spurs jingling. He turned and there was a steely glint in his eyes that silenced further comment. "If I were you gentlemen, I'd stay pretty close to home tomorrow night. The Vigilantes of New Granada are going to ride for the first time."

The next night the stables of Runnels Express Service were empty of animals and all of the hlooded race horses were missing from their stalls at the race track. From ocean to ocean on the Yankee Strip that night there were the swift hoofbeats of running horses and the groans of pain and surprise as certain individuals were jerked from their heds.

Next morning, the old sea wall at Panama City had some new decorations. Thirty-seven corpses hung by the neck above the

wall. Vengeful justice had come to the Isthmus at last.

The shocked populace cut down the dangling corpses and identified them. It bad been a very democratic hanging, they found. All of the nationalities on the Isthmus were represented—Yankees, Europeans, Spaniards and Panamenos—all dangled side by side. Several prominent business men were there and even some Panamanian officials. No explanations were offered for the mass hanging, and none of the subdued populace asked any questions. It was a sobering example to the public, especially those given to dark and larcenous ways.

That night, from one end of the Strip to the other, there was no violence. No stabbings, sluggings or killings marred the sudden, jarring peace. Patrons were polite in the barrooms and tbe bartenders even said thank you when they accepted the exorbitant prices for the embalming fluid dispensed by the drink. Some of the girls began leaving off their gunbelts when they hit the hay with their whiskery customers.

The Runnels plan for peace on the Isthmus was off to a flying start. In one swoop be had cleaned out the bulk of the Derienni. The secret committee gave him a standing ovation when he appeared in Nelson's quarters at the Lavista Hotel a few nights later.

"Well done," said the American consul. "Law and order have come to the Isthmus at last."

Mr. Runnels lit his Spanisb cigar and squinted his eyes against the smoke, looking around at the well-groomed memhers of the secret committee. "Don't sell out your Vigilante sbares too fast, boys," he said. "There'll be a lot more action on this Istbmus before it gets safe enougb for sheepherders."

The next three months were an era of peaceful progress. Tbe pack trains made their passages across the Isthmus without bindrance, and it was not unusual for travelers to brave the trip alone and make it without misbap. Runnels Express Service continued to prosper. Branch offices appeared at Cruces, Gorgona, Gatun and Cbagres. Runnels' men were everywhere, meeting new arrivals and keeping track of tbe permanent residents. Runnels himself was back at the faro table and the race track, but his men kept him constantly in touch with what was going on.

Then, very slowly and insidiously, it began to bappen all over again. The body of a prospector, pockets turned inside out, wasbed up on the river bank at Chagres one morning. A prostitute was strangled and robbed in her room by a customer sbe was servicing without ber gunbelt. Guns began to flash from the jungle thickets again and travelers began banding together for mutual protection on the crossing. Masked bandits entered a crowded barroom in Gorgon, robbed the gambling tables and shot up the place, leaving four patrons sprawled on the floor writhing in death throes.

CONSUL Nelson and the committee called in Runnels again. "It looks as if you were right, Mr. Runnels. Tbe Strip certainly isn't safe enough for sbeepherders yet."

Runnels was thoughtful. "It's going to be harder this time, you know. Last time they had a central organization, and we just eliminated it. Now tbey're scattered and disorganized."

"We bave the utmost confidence in your ability to cope witb the situation," said Mr. Nelson.

A few days afterward there was a meeting of Runnels and company in the back room of the express service beadquarters. That day they had just received word that seven Californians had been brutally murdered and robbed on tbe jungle trail near cruces.

Runnels made his assignments. "Each leader is responsible for the people on his



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list. Round them up and get back here. Don't be late for the necktie party."

That night the stables were empty and again there were hoofbeats and the squeak of saddle leather up and down the gold trail. When the sun rose over the old sea wall at Panama City it revealed the bodies of 41 men hanging by the neck from the timbers projecting from the wall. Marked among the bodies were those of three bushwhackers who had murdered the seven Californians near Cruces. No prominent individuals were included among this group. They were merely the rats and riffraff dredged from the hack alleys of the towns and the thickets of the jungle trail.

A peaceful hush again dropped over the Yankee Strip.

DURING the next three years, until completion of the railroad across the Isthmus trouble was sporadic and stamped out ruthlessly. Runnels dropped the guise of a retiring business man and became known openly as the enforcer of law on the Yankee Strip. His men circulated everywhere, keeping him informed concerning all criminal activities. Perpetrators of crimes found it difficult to keep their affairs secret. When Runnels and his men received a tip concerning a murderer or robber and verified the information, the end of that individual was generally sealed. His body was soon found hanging on the sea wall or from a tree on the jungle trail.

Runnel's word was law and sometimes he resorted to banishment, rather than the death penalty. On one occasion he approached a man at a faro table in the Cavista Hotel. "Holmes, we've had enough of your business on the Yankee Strip. There's a steamer leaving in the morning. Be on it. Don't ever come back here." He turned on his heel and walked away.

Holmes caught the steamer and went to California, but could not give up his thieving ways. So he was soon serving a term in San Quentin Penitentiary. He sent word to California's Governor Bigler that he knew where a cache of $200,000 in gold dust was buried on the Yankee Strip. Holmes received a pardon in 1856, three years after he had been banished from the Isthmus, and returned to Panama City accompanied by a deputy of the California governor. Their object was to recover the alleged treasure.

On arrival in Panama, Holmes shook hands with his California escort and bid him adieu. "Goodby, old man," he said. "It was all a mistake. The treasure is buried in my imagination. Give my regards to Governor Bigler when you return."

The California officer was incensed but he had no authority outside the United States. He went to William Nelson, the American consul, for help and Nelson referred him to Runnels.

Runnels was seriously put out by the way Holmes had flouted his banishment decree. Such disrespect for law and order could not go unnoticed. He found Holmes hellied up to the har in the Shades Saloon, sampling a julep.

"Jim Holmes, you violated the law," Runnels greeted him.

Holmes felt back against the mahogany, blanching. "I ain't going to draw on you, Runnels. I don't have a gun."

"Jim Holmes, you broke the law. I sentence you to death. You can be hanged on the sea wall or gunned down in this har. Which will it be?"

"You're crazy, Runnels!" Holmes screamed. These were his last words as he went for the derringer in his vest pocket. One of the big bone-handled revolvers crashed and Jim Holmes pitched forward, face down into the sawdust. The derringer never made it out of his pocket.

"That, mighty pretty, Mr. Runnels," the bartender remarked in respectful tones to the judge, jury and executioner of the Yankee Strip. "Mighty pretty."

"He broke the law," said Runnels with finality. "Take him away."

They hung Jim Holmes's body on the old sea wall at Panama City for everyone to see, and Runnels pinned this notice to his pants leg: "This man came back here when he knew he wasn't supposed to. Let this he a warning to all evildoers and lawbreakers who try to give our home a bad name."

With the completion of the Panama Railroad across the Isthmus in January, 1855, gold order remained changing. Horses supplanted the mules in the gold transport. By rail the precious dust and other valuable freight could be shuttled across the Strip in six hours. The first transcontinental railroad in America was finally in operation.

The old way stations on the gold trail—scenes of so many violent ambuscades—withered and died. Even Yankee Chagres disappeared. The eastern terminus of the railroad was a new town called Aspinwall—(later Colon) and here the steamships docked, leaving Yankee Chagres to he swallowed by the jungle.

The completion of the railroad spelled finis for the Darienni and all their cohorts. The green jungle took back the secret trails and hiding places.

With the coming of the peaceful era, Ran Runnels turned in his resignation to the international committee, and bowed out of his harsh vigilante role. But the Yankee Strip was in his blood. He remained on the Isthmus to become the chief police officer of the railroad.

The Panama Railroad had a brief but fahulous history, operating as the first and only American transcontinental railroad for approximately 14 years. During this time practically all the gold mined in California moved east over its rails. More than five hundred million dollars in dust and nullion went over this route, enough wealth to make any of its trains a glittering prize for a train rohher.

Yet, in an era when trains were being robbed with impunity all over the world, the Panama Railroad went unscathed. Not even the toughest train rohher would risk the ire of the little man with hig guns and long rope.

The ping of the hammer driving the silver and gold spikes joining the Central Pacific and Union Pacific railroads at Promontory Point, Utah, on May 10, 1869, sounded the death knell of the Panama route. The old, bloody, colorful days hecame just a memory.

Runnels hung up his sixguns for good and retired to his ranch ahove Bohio Soldado to raise horses. His work had been well done. The Strip was a law ahiding place.

For years he was a prominent figure in Panama, a part of its history, a sort of living legend. Until his death in the 1890's, he was known respectfully as "Colonel" Ran Runnels.

END



Minnesota Died on Saturday

Continued from page 38

Slowly the train inched ahead toward the bridge. The upper structure was burning but the lower supports still seemed firm. Actually Barry had no choice: he could only hope. He let the locomotive proceed with heavy caution out onto the bridge. He felt the bridge sag. Further, further. Now cars were softly clicking on the bridge rails. A sweep of wind pushed flames deeper into the lower structure. Wood slats began breaking off, dropping into the river.

Then Barry heard the familiar sound of locomotive wheels on solid ground. Still he could not relax. The train stretched out behind him, enough weight to drag the engine back into the river if the bridge gave. Carefully he opened the throttle a twist, wary against any sudden action that might shake the bridge. Seconds later he heard great cheers from the rear-car passengers, cheers that were immediately drowned out by the roar of ripping wood and steel as the bridge collapsed and plunged into the river.

The great heat had melted telegraph wires for miles around. Continuing its leapfrog attack, the fire burst upon the village of Sandstone, nine miles north of Hinckley on the Eastern Minnesota line. The depot telegrapher could see the wires disintegrating as she tried futilely to send out warning of the spreading inferno. Most of the town's 200 people found refuge in the Kettle River, but 40 were killed and Sandstone was utterly destroyed in ten minutes. No homeowner saved so much as a spoon.

At Hinckley, the hundred who had gathered in the storage clearing were all killed, buried by burning timber. The people in the shallow water of the gravel pit risked being boiled to death. The water got so hot it was no longer safe to dip babies into it to cool their bodies. Encircled by flames, people in the pool suffered blisters that expanded like balloons and burst.

FOR those still trapped in town, there was only one possible route of escape: north, where the St. Paul & Duluth tracks cut a thin path between the walls of fire. Already the ties were burning, and steel rails snapped free and curled like bacon. Despite the danger, scores of people stumbled northward along the roadbed. Thirty of them were roasted alive within the first few miles of town.

For the rest there was one last hope: the Duluth Limited.

Jim Root had no idea that his train was already surrounded by fire. Freakishly, the flames roared beyond thin frontiers of tall pine, hidden by thick smoke. Unable to see ahead, Jim had slowed the Limited to half-speed. Stretching out of the cab for a better view was like putting his head into an oven. To be able to stand the beat he repeatedly doused himself with water.

"Jim," Jack McGowan urged, "we'd better back out of here."

"Hinckley," said Jim. "We've got to get to Hinckley."

"How do you know Hinckley is still there?"

"We've got to go on," Jim said firmly.

Six miles north of Hinckley was a five-acre swamp known as Skunk Lake; a railroad trestle spanned it. Reaching the trestle, Jim put his train into slow-speed and began to inch across. Halfway across he could see the fire all around him, a blazing curtain fringing the shoreline. His first thought was to slam the train into reverse and get away while there was still time. But he knew that Hinckley was just ahead. He decided that if any people were still alive it was his job to get them out. Behind him, his passengers panicked. Root ignored their screams. He sped up his train, sending it plunging back into the flaming forests toward Hinckley. Twice the flames reached into the locomotive cab and set Root's clothes on fire. He poured water on himself and went on.

About a mile out of Hinckley, Jim saw the first refugees. As he stopped the train, he saw lifelike bands of fire reach out and grab people off their feet and pull them into the furnace of timber. Men and women, half-dead from the heat, from burns, from exhaustion, labored toward the train.

"You can't get through," a man shouted up at Root. "The tracks are burning."

"What about Hinckley?" Root called.

"There's nothing left of it!"

Root looked back at his train. Sparks had settled on the wooden cars and fires were breaking out. Ties under the train were ablaze. Jim Root ordered: "Get aboard. Hurry!"

People weren't waiting to be told. Dozens of them were already fighting to board the train. Entrances were jammed. Few members threw open windows, lifting children into the cars. Root realized he couldn't wait for them all and began easing the train into reverse. About 120 had made it.

Quickly Jim Root got his train up to 25-miles, but the fire was traveling just as fast and flames lapped out at the cars. By the time the Limited was back at Skunk Lake it was completely on fire. The instant Root stopped the train the trestle itself caught fire.

Passengers and refugees battled to get off the train and into the shallow lake. In the panic, doors jammed and windows stuck, breaking open under the sheer terrified strength of those trapped inside. Two Chinese from Duluth tried to protect themselves against the chaos by slipping under the seats. They were still there when the car was utterly consumed by flames. Others, their bones broken and flesh ripped by the debris, fell into the two-foot-deep lake and drowned. Approximately 200 were able to get into the water and far enough away to escape unharmed when the train and trestle collapsed into the lake, crushing those nearby.

Jim Root was never sure what happened after that. He recalled feeling the hot swampy

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water swirl around him as he struggled to get away from the passenger cars which still burned in the shallow lake. Then he sank into the water to protect himself from the flames which shot out over the lake like lightning. The heat was unbearable. Some people tried to drink the putrid lake water, then vomited and became violently ill.

In the first minutes, the crackling air echoed the terrified shrieks of the injured and the dying. Then a silence came and there was only the muffled sobs of the frightened. Night fell and the fire moved on, leaving behind smouldering trees that tumbled into the water with great bissing gushes. Along the shore, the ground gradually cooled and people made their way out of the swamp.

Jim was among them. In the crowd he found Jack Gowan, dazed but uninjured. Conductor Pete Sullivan had gone out of his mind. He wandered aimlessly among the survivors, muttering: "I had to throw a little girl into the water. I didn't mean to. Is she all right? Have you seen a little girl? I wanted to save her. Her dress was on fire. Did you see the little girl?"

All night the inland trees still hurned. No one dared leave the lake. It was around six in the morning, when the first streaks of dawn cut through the haze of smoke, that the rescue teams arrived. Jim Root, still stunned by the horror he had witnessed, was only vaguely aware of being led through the woods to a bandcar which took him to Mission Creek where a work-train waited to transfer to St. Paul those who were ahle to travel.

It was all over—all but the weeping.

EARLY in the fire there had been a large exodus southward to Pine City, a dozen miles away. The smoke-population of Mission City, four miles south of Hinckley, had managed to reach there, leaving a town of ashes hehind them. Scores of refugees from Hinckley, traveling on horsehack, in carts and on foot, had rushed through the burning village on their way to Pine City, and it was from there that the world first learned what had happened. Farmers and woodsmen came straggling in for two days with horrifying tales of the destruction they had seen.

Nobody was ever certain how many died. The official estimate was 425, hut there were probahly more. Property losses ran into millions of dollars, little of it covered hy insurance.

The dawn after the fire, relief trains left from the Twin Cities and Duluth to converge on the vast gutted area. Ruined tracks stopped all trains miles out and rescue teams had to proceed on handcars or by road. Destroyed bridges delayed any kind of advance into the region. In the race to help survivors, the first supplies to arrive at Hinckley were, sadly, shipments of wood to he used as coffins. Many of the victims were never identified. Sometimes it was even impossible to distinguish a human corpse from an animal carcass. Bodies bloated beyond recognition were scooped out of the gravel-pit puddle, out of the Grindstone and Kettle rivers, out of Skunk Lake. For weeks afterwards, clean-up crews came upon charred remains in the woods, two and three miles out.

What bewildered everyone was the freakishness of the fire, the diaholic way in which it seemed to hunt out its victims. For example, Jim Bean, the lumberyard foreman, died under a wagon where sheets of flames apparently drove him, hut the two horses hitched to the wagon were found the next morning still in harness and not even singed. At the home of Mrs. Fred Best, ten members of the family were killed in the front part of the house, while three out back escaped unharmed. Some people, dazed and stunned, were able to wander through the burning streets for hours without the slightest injury, yet every person who rushed to the seeming safety of the storage clearing was killed. The clearing, in a low part of town, was normally swampy, and workers carrying bodies away found that the ground was still moist from early summer rains.

In a few days, the survivors of the Hinckley fire left the towns where they had fled and began to return home. There were some, however, who had lost everything—family, house, husiness—and they could not hring themselves to go back to the place that held such painful memories for them. They went away, trying to forget.

Weeks passed before the railroad tracks were sufficiently repaired for trains to resume service. At last Jim Root went back to work. But the run to Duluth was never the same for him. The trip that was once beautiful, restful and inspiring to him was now filled with hlood-freezing memories which he never lost. Everyone agreed that for going on through the fire and reaching the Hinckley refugees and taking them back to the lake Jim Root deserved a medal—"a medal of gold and diamonds," as someone put it. He didn't get it; he didn't want it. He said he hoped to forget what he had gone through and he crushed every effort to make a hero out of him.

The sorrows of those who attempted to huild a new life out of ashes touched hearts across the country. Money, food and clothes poured into Hinckley. It would have been somewhat consoling if, braced by such hopeful support, Hinckley had grown into a thriving city, fulfilling the promise it once held. But this did not happen. A certain spirit had gone out of the town. In over 60 years, it has not regained what it lost. Its population has stayed at 400 less than it was on that bleak Saturday morning. Today, Hinckley is a quiet Minnesota country-town—a silent town with tragedy in its past. END

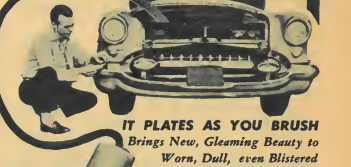
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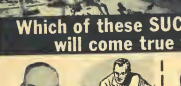
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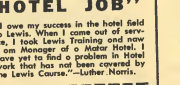
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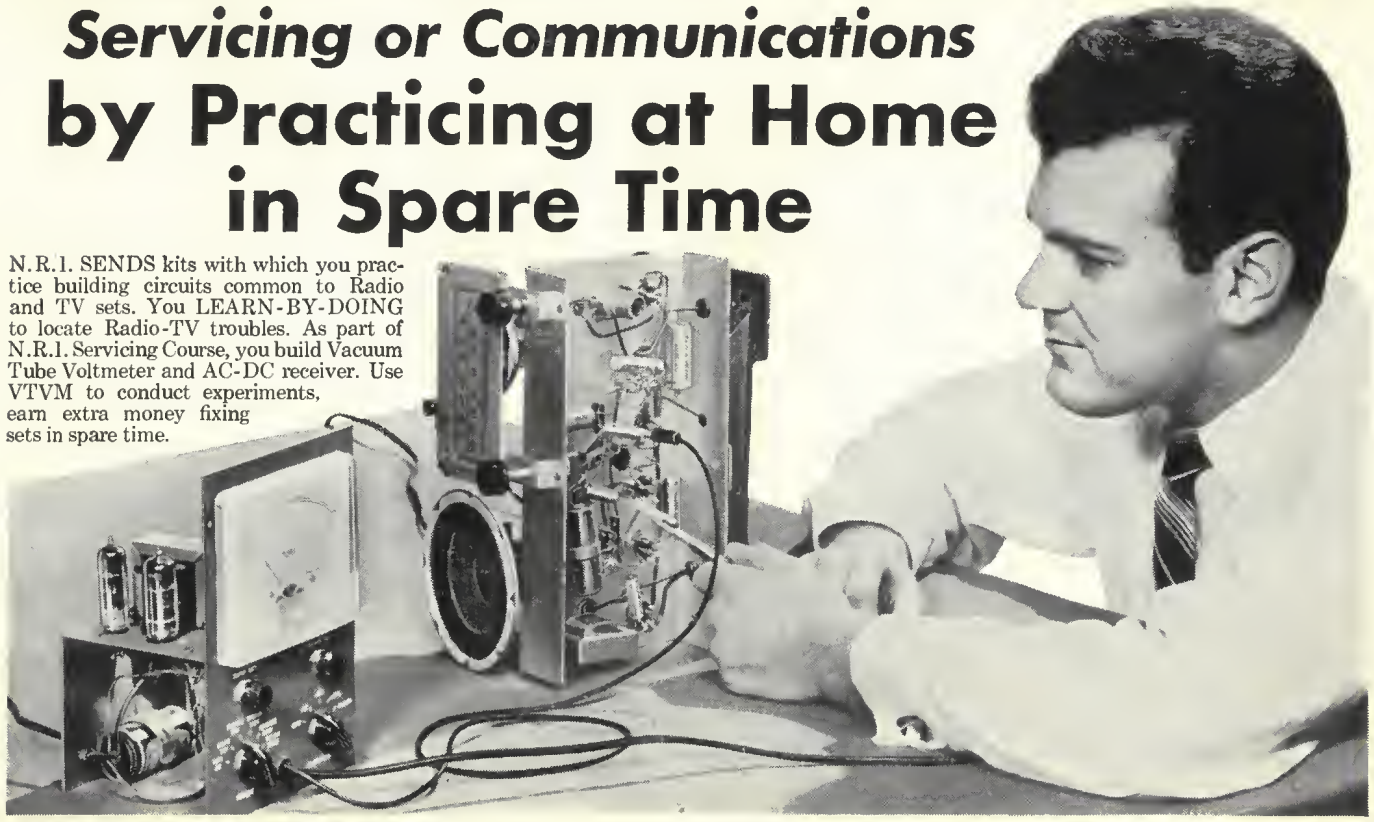
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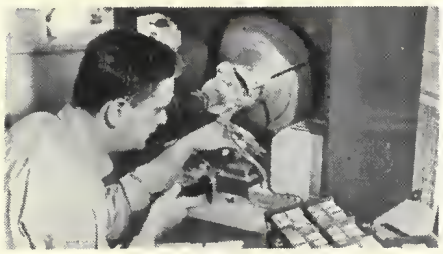
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